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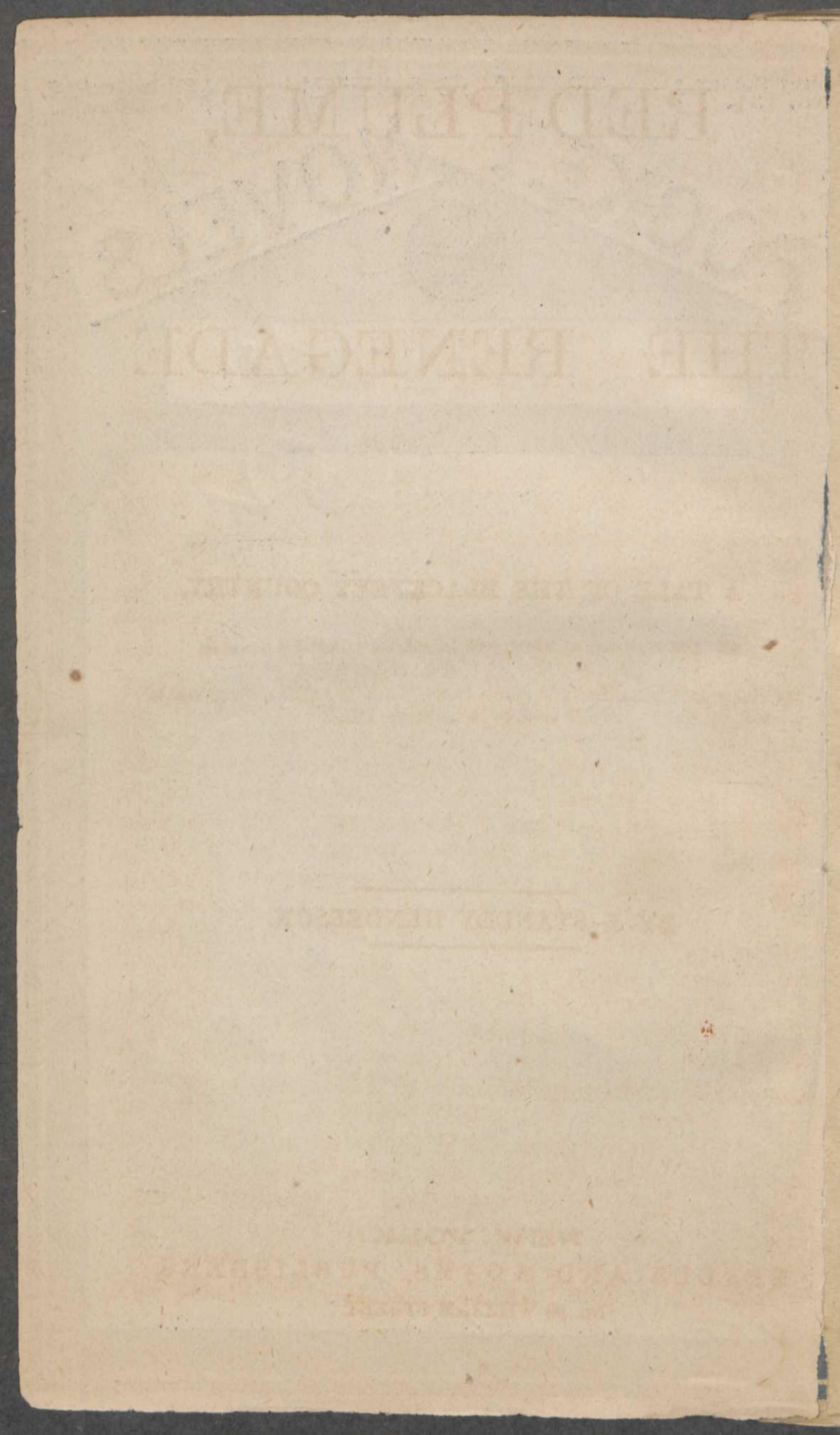
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POCKET NOVELS



Red Plume.





RED PLUME,

THE RENEGADE.

A TALE OF THE BLACKFEET COUNTRY.

BY J. STANLEY HENDERSON.

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RED PLUME.

CHAPTER I.

THE RED LOVERS.

IT was near sunset, toward the close of the summer of the year 183—, in the valley of the Saskatchie (so called at that time), a stream that formed one of the head-waters of the great Missouri. The sun had not set to the world above the valley, for his last rays were painting with crimson and purple the snow-clad summits of the lofty Wind River Mountains; and tinging, with the hues of the violet and opal, the cloudy slopes of the distant Yellowstone range. It was sunset in the valley, however, and the only rays to light up its verdurous slopes and shady coverts were those of the myriad stars that peeped out from the vault above, to be reflected by the placid surface of the rippling stream. The fresh breeze blowing over the broad prairies beyond, and among the rugged ridges and defiles near the valley, was heard among the branches of the tall cottonwoods, but it hardly stirred the more delicate foliage of the willows and alders, that nestled low down by the side of the water.

On one side of the stream, the valley was narrow, shut in by bluffs, and cut up by rocky elevations; on the other side, it was broad, and like a rolling prairie, covered with a heavy growth of luxuriant grass, dotted with gigantic trees, and sloping away gradually to the level of the plain above. At what appeared to be the broadest part of the plain, partially concealed by a wooded bluff, was an Indian camp, or migratory village, containing some fifty lodges. It was evidently not a war-party, or the lodge-poles would not have been there, nor would women and children have been seen moving about among the lodges and on the bank of the stream. It was also evident that they did not fear attack, and

considered themselves in no sort of danger, or smoke would not have been issuing from the peaks of the skin-lodges, and horses would not have been grazing at will on the abundant grass of the plain.

The lodges belonged to a band of the Blackfeet tribe, those dangerous banditti of the mountains, whose hand was against every man and every man's hand against them — whose fierce, warlike and implacable dispositions kept them continually at war with other tribes and with the white men who occasionally invaded their territory. But, this band seemed inclined to be peaceable, to wish only to feed their horses in that luxuriant pasture, and to drink the sparkling waters of the Saskatchie. They seemed to consider themselves in perfect security, although their hereditary enemies, the Crows, lay above them, near the foot of the Yellowstone range, and hovered beyond them on the broad prairie; and although it was the season when bands of trappers and other whites were expected to be making their way westward.

Under the tall cottonwoods, and near the belt of willows that skirted the glistening stream, two Indians, a young warrior and a young woman, were walking on the soft carpet of green grass, and talking in tones hardly louder than the sooughing of the wind among the branches.

The warrior was a splendid specimen of Indian manhood — tall, well molded, lithe and sinewy, with really noble features, flashing eyes, high brow, and finely-arched lips. He looked like a free son of the mountains, and not like the lower order of beings who roamed the prairies and hung about the borders of the settlements. His bright-colored war-paint, while it by no means improved his appearance, proclaimed that he was already renowned in the tribe as a warrior, a fact that was further evidenced by his head-ornament of eagles' feathers, over which waved, and floated gracefully backward, a long, scarlet plume.

The young woman was not a maiden, but the wife of Nip-muck-we, otherwise known as Fat Bear, the old chief who was at the head of the band. She was beautiful, in the Indian style, although she was a squaw, and it was for her handsome face and form that the old Bear had chosen her, without consulting her own wishes, and had made her his

wife. It could not have been expected that La-la would love him, and she did not, but she was dutiful, and waited on her lord and master, and did his drudgery, quite uncomplainingly. Although she accepted her fate with resignation, she was far from happy, for her heart had been given, years ago, to the young warrior who was walking by her side under the cottonwoods.

"La-la must go to her lodge," she said, in a voice that was singularly soft and musical.

"Why must she go?" responded the manly accents of the warrior. "The dew has not yet begun to fall; the smoke is still rising from the lodges, and the sun has not left the tops of the mountains."

"Nip-muck-we will wonder; he will say I have been wandering with Kotselo, and that I am not a good wife to him."

"He will know nothing of it. The Bear has gone on the prairie to hunt. He said he was going to hunt, but Kotselo knows that he lied, for some of our best young men went with him, in their war-paint. He would not take Kotselo, for he hates me. His foot is now on the war-path, and your lodge will not see him again, until he can bring scalps to the village. We can walk as we choose, and need have no fear of Nip-muck-we."

"I know that he is absent, and he said that two suns would set before he should return; but, old As-moo-tah is in the lodge, and she watches me, as he has told her to, and he knows where I go and what I do."

"Why should he set a watch upon you? Why should we not walk as we choose? What harm do we do? We were children together, and we are but as children now. Together we played about the lodges; together we sought the flowers and grasses; together we culled the willow-twigs and wove our baskets; together we floated on the stream, by sunlight and by moonlight. Why should we not walk together and talk together, as we have always done? Does Nip-muck-we think that Kotselo has the heart of a snake, that he will crawl in the grass where he is hid, and that there is poison in his tongue? Have the eyes of the chief grown old, so that he sees things that are not?"

"The chief thinks," answered La-la, the Indian gutturals

dropping smoothly from her lips, "that Kotselo loves his wife."

"And that is true," said the warrior.

"He thinks, too, that his wife loves Kotselo better than she loves himself."

"That, also, is true, I believe."

"The chief knows that he is old and ugly, and he know that Kotselo is young and handsome, that the eyes of all the maidens are turned upon him, more than upon any other warrior. That is why he sets a watch upon us, why he is angry if we are together."

"The Fat Bear should have been called the Burrowing Dog," angrily exclaimed the young man; "for he has the heart of a dog, and he would hide his wife in the ground, for fear that other eyes than his own should look upon her. It is true that we love each other, but we love as children, as we have always loved. The Bear had better save his spite for the enemies of the Blackfeet, than waste it upon us. Because he has the heart of a dog, does he think his wife has not the heart of a woman? He knows that there is none braver than Kotselo—that not one of the young men has brought home so many scalps. He knows that I speak openly, and do not lie; why does he not tell me what is in his heart, instead of creeping like a snake to sting me? He has tried to keep me from the council, to shut me from the dance that was held over the scalps of enemies who had been slain by me. He shall do it no more; he must not provoke me too far; for the heart of Kotselo is true, but his anger is hot and quick. We will walk as we choose, my Star-in-the-grass, and will talk as we used to talk, and will love each each other as we have loved, and the Fat Bear may growl as he pleases."

"You must not speak so," said La-la, in a trembling voice. "I must go to my lodge, for—"

She trembled still more, and covered her face with her hands, as the couple were greeted with an eldritch shriek, half-yell and half-laughter, and a decrepit old hag, with a savage grin on her ugly features, stepped out from behind the trunk of a cottonwood, and stood before them.

"Ha! ha!" she exclaimed. "Did you think that Nip

muck-we had no eyes? Did you think him so far away, that he can not see his young squaw, when she walks under the trees at night, and talks love with Kotselo, the handsome snake? Nip-muck-we has gone to hunt, with his young men, but he looks through the eyes of As-moo-tah, and her eyes are bright and wide open. The Fat Bear is far away on the prairie, but he hears with the ears of As-moo-tah, and her tongue can tell what she has listened to."

"What means the screech-owl?" angrily exclaimed the young warrior. "Why does she hover around us, like a foul buzzard? What has her wicked eyes seen, and what has her hungry ears heard? We do nothing, and say nothing, that we fear to have known."

"I have seen Kotselo hold the hand of the chief's squaw," hissed the old hag. "I have seen him bend down and whisper soft words in her ears, and I have heard him say that they two would love each other as much as they wished, and the Fat Bear might growl as he pleased. They will find that the Fat Bear will not be content with growling, that he can use his teeth and his claws."

"There was nothing wrong in what we did or said," persisted Kotselo. "La-la is my sister; I have always loved her as my sister, and she has loved me as her brother. There is no reason why we should not be brother and sister still. You can tell Nip-muck-we what you please, but he had better beware how he tries to use his teeth and his claws, for he knows that the eyes of Kotselo are sharp, and his arm is strong. Come, La-la, let us walk, and give no heed to the screeching of old As-moo-tah."

"No, Kotselo," answered the young woman. "No, my brother. I must go to my lodge. I should have gone long ago."

"Yes, get to your lodge, and dream of what your husband will say and do when he returns from the hunt," shrieked As-moo-tah, half pushing, half striking her, until she nearly fell to the ground.

But the young warrior interposed his tall form between the hag and the object of her wrath, took La-la's hand in his own, and walked with her to the lodge, As-moo-tah following them, chattering and vociferating.

CHAPTER II.

"JEST THE PURTIEST THING."

"WA-AL, uncle, I rayther calkilate that this is jist about good a place as we can find for campin' to-night."

"What do you say about it, Delaware?" continued the speaker, as he struck his ax into a cottonwood sapling, cutting through the soft wood, and bringing the young tree to the ground.

"Maybe so you are right," answered the Indian who was addressed. "Black Beaver has watched the signs, and they are good, but maybe so signs lie sometimes."

"Calkilate they don't often lie to you, Beaver, when you ain't turned from the natural bent of your mind by a little too much New England rum. What do you say, uncle? Shall we put up at this tavern to-night? I am as hungry as a whirlpool, and feel as if I could suck in a hull buffalo-hump."

"I believe it is as good a place as we can find," was the answer, "and if the Delaware makes no objections, we will camp here to-night."

The Indian gave consent by his silence, and preparations were immediately and rapidly made, for the purpose of getting supper, and of passing the night as comfortably and safely as possible.

The party consisted of Nathan Carver, his wife Sarah, his son David, his daughter Ellen, his nephew, Eben Gookin, and a Delaware Indian, called Black Beaver, and generally known, "for short," as Beaver.

All except the Indian were from the good State of Massachusetts, were of the stout old Pilgrim stock, the name of Carver being commemorated by a thriving town, and that of Gookin having been rendered memorable by the famous clergyman, who was immortalized in an ancient poem as "our dear Gookin." Nathan Carver was rather beyond the middle age, but was hale and strong, pious and industrious, persevering

and hopeful, cool in judgment and deliberate in speech and action. Having grown tired of civilized life, and feeling the pioneer spirit strong within him, he had resolved to build a home for himself, and a fortune for those who should come after him, in the wilds of the far West. Accordingly, accompanied by his family, with his household goods contained in two wagons, and with the Delaware Indian for a guide, he was on his way to the almost unknown region of Oregon.

Sarah Carver was of about the same age as her husband, and possessed many of his characteristics. She was a "well-preserved" woman, though a life of labor and care had left its lines upon a face that had once been handsome. Her daughter, Ellen Carver, possessed beauty enough for the whole family, beauty of the fresh, healthy, hearty, New England style. Her bright blue eyes, her rosy cheeks, her rich red lips, and her dimpled chin, had caused many a swain to sigh in her old home, and it seemed a pity that such sweetness should be wasted on the desert air, or be appreciated only by her cousin Eben, whose ungainly admiration often excited her mirth.

David Carver, the son, was a stalwart youth of twenty, active, hearty and industrious, with a fair share of intelligence, with a great love of adventure, and with any amount of courage. Eben Gookin was a tall, angular, awkward-appearing individual, who always seemed to be loose in the joints, and looked as if he was continually outgrowing his clothes. He had left his home as soon as he was old enough, and had endeavored to see the world on a whaling ship. When he returned after a long cruise, he concluded that he was tired of that amusement, and eagerly embraced the opportunity of accompanying his uncle on his journey to the West, especially as he had taken a great fancy to his fair cousin.

The Delaware was, like most of his tribe, an excellent guide and hunter, a brave warrior, and a man who took pride in dealing justly with his employers. Under his leadership, the party had come thus far without any serious misadventure, and were slowly traveling on the Oregon trail, from which they had turned aside, to seek a proper camping-place for the night.

The spot chosen for the encampment was in a little grove,

in the midst of the broad prairie, by a spring of clear water, from which a sparkling little rivulet trickled away toward the south-east. The wagons were soon brought within the protection of the timber, the horses were duly picketed and allowed to graze, a fire was made, and Mrs. Carver and her daughter, awkwardly assisted by Eben Gookin, applied themselves to the cooking of sundry pieces of buffalo-meat, which speedily diffused a pleasant fragrance through the little camp, and excited the appetites of the travelers. The savory repast was soon spread before them, and, after Nathan Carver had pronounced a rather elaborate "grace," all fell to in earnest, without any too scrupulous regard for knives and forks, and made the humps, ribs and tongues disappear rapidly. When they had satisfied their appetites, pipes were produced, and the men proceeded to digest their supper under the soothing influence of the weed. The Delaware, after a few whiffs of his pipe, took his rifle, and went to reconnoiter around the camp.

"Darn my buttons!" exclaimed Eben, as he stretched himself at full length upon the grass, "I do think that whalin' ain't a touch to this here business. The sea is a big place, but it's too much the same thing, while there's all sorts of variety about these prairies, and, besides, you always have a good place to come to anchor at when night sets in. It is mortal fine fun to kill a big whale, but buffalo huntin' has got more raal amusement into it. Uncle Nathan, I wouldn't have missed goin' on this cruise for a bushel of dollars. 'Pears like I've growed out of my boots, and I calkilate I'm the outeatinest critter that ever left the old Bay State."

"We have truly been blessed thus far," answered Nathan Carver, "and we owe our grateful thanks to the kind Providence who has spared our lives and preserved our health. We are now well advanced on our journey, and we may reasonably hope, if the same good hand shall guard and guide us, to soon reach our destination in the land of toil and promise."

"Provided always, uncle, as the lawyers say, that some sneakin' Injuns don't drop in on us an' steal our top-knots."

"Against such, we must defend ourselves as best we can, with the help of Providence. It is our duty to keep our weapons in good order, and to maintain a careful watch, for the

Delaware informs us that we are approachin' a dangerous region; that we are near the country of the Blackfeet."

"Beaver was tellin' me some yarns about those critters, uncle, and he says that they are a little the p'isonest Injuns we are likely to meet."

"Your speech savors of impiety, nephew. I have no doubt that they are wicked and bloodthirsty men, but there is no occasion for the use of profanity in speaking of them."

"I didn't mean to talk wrong, uncle Nathan, and beg your pardon for slippin' up. Old habits *will* stick to a man, you see, 'specially such as he l'arns on a whalin' v'y'ge. What you say about takin' care of our weapons is sart'inly right, and it reminds me that I must look arter my harpoon, for I calke-late she needs sharpenin'. I say, Dave, as you are nighest to that wagon, suppose you hand me my tickler. It is in the starn of the craft, I believe, on the starboard side."

"Do you want the rope and all?" asked David Carver, as he good-naturedly rose to comply with his cousin's request.

"Of course I do; a whale-line needs overhaulin' every now and then, you see, to keep the kinks out, and to make it run easy when it gits to work."

David handed his cousin an iron shaft, about six feet long, one end of which was adorned with a polished barb, and the other end was bent around, so as to afford a holding place for a long and light line, which was neatly coiled and fastened in ship-shape manner. Eben selected a stone from the side of the spring, laid his formidable javelin on his lap, and commenced to sharpen the edge of the shining barb quite scientifically.

"That, now, is what I call a lovely instrument," he said, regarding the weapon affectionately. "'Pears like I should be lost without it, and I'm glad I brought it along. It has been the means of shortenin' the life of more'n one whale, to my sart'in knowledge, and it stands to reason that it wouldn't be safe for a buffalo or an Injun to git in the way of it."

"Why do you think so much of that ugly thing, cousin Eben?" asked Ellen, who was watching his proceedings with interest. "Of what use can it be?"

"Tain't a bit ugly, Miss Sweetlips," answered Eben. "See this here shinin' steel; why, it is nearly as bright as your

eyes. No, 'tain't, neither; nothin' is as bright as them, unless it's the stars above us, or the royal diamonds of the Ingees. You can see your purty face into it, jist as if it was a mirror, and I wish you could look into it so hard that your face would stay there always."

"Never mind my face and eyes, cousin Eben. I want to know how you expect to use your harpoon out here in the w'lderness."

"Wa-al, in the fust place, speakin' about its peaceable use, I understand we are comin' to some rivers that are chock full of salmon at sart'in seasons of the year, and then this nice little instrument will git us many a good breakfast and dinner. Secondly, if it hadn't been for uncle Nathan and the Delaware, I might have speared many a buffalo with it, and buffaloes are wholesome food, I calkilate. Lastly, and to conclude, as the preachers say, if any of those Injuns come foolin' around us, or tryin' to come any of their games over you, my sweet little duck, this here little article will let daylight through 'em quicker'n you can say Jack Robinson."

"I am not a little duck, or a little goose, and am sure that I don't belong to you. Suppose the Indian will not let you get near enough to him to strike him with that?"

"He had better keep a mortal good distance, if he don't want me to harpoon him. Do you see the knot in that tree yonder, Nelly?" continued Eben, rising and pointing at an oak about twenty yards from where he stood.

"Yes; I see the knot. What of it?"

"Wa-al, I don't want to hit the knot, my beauty, 'cause it might dull the edge of the harpoon; so I will strike jist above 't. Stand by to let out the slack, and watch her shoot!"

The whaler rose to his full hight, his tall form appearing to pen out by joints, somewhat after the fashion of a carpenter's rule, drew back his long and brawny arm, carefully poised the harpoon for a few seconds, and then launched it forward with tremendous force. It flew like an arrow from the bow, true to the direction that had been imparted to it, struck the tree just above the knot that he had pointed out, and quivered as it stuck firmly in the solid oak. David Carver clapped his hands, and even his father could not repress an exclamation of wonder.

"It wouldn't have been wholesome for an Injun, if he had been standin' where that tree is," said Eben. "Run and see if you can pick out the harpoon, Nelly."

The girl hastened to the tree, and succeeded at last, by using her utmost exertions, in extricating the harpoon, which she brought back to its owner, who had been regarding her with unmistakable admiration.

"Sakes alive, Nelly!" he exclaimed, "you've jist got the purtiest feet and ankles that ever made the daisies open their eyes! Give me a kiss, now, for showin' you that sight."

He bent down for the expected tribute, as if it was a matter of course, and was greeted with a box on the ear, that made him jump and turn around as if a bee had stung him, while Ellen ran away laughing.

"Darn my buttons!" he exclaimed. "That's a little the sassiest slap I ever got, which is sayin' considerable. However, some folks say that a box on the ear is better than no notice. Hark! What's that?"

The report of a gun was heard, followed by a shrill whoop or halloo.

"There must be Indians near us," said Nathan Carver. "David, run and find the Delaware. Eben, stay here and help me secure the horses."

David Carver seized his rifle, and hastened off through the trees, while his father and Eben made preparations to defend the camp against an attack.

CHAPTER III.

AS MIGHT HAVE BEEN EXPECTED.

As David Carver reached the edge of the wood, and was about to sally forth upon the prairie, to learn the cause of the disturbance, a dark form rose up from the grass near him and a hand laid upon his shoulder arrested his rapid course. He turned, and recognized the Delaware Indian.

"What is the matter, Beaver?" hurriedly asked the young

man. "What did that shot and that yell mean? Are there Indians about?"

"Black Beaver thinks not. He don't yell like Injun. Wait little bit, and maybe so we find out."

The Delaware again crouched in the grass, David Carver following his example, and both peered anxiously out into the prairie, on which the dusk of evening was fast settling down.

Soon they were able to make out the figure of a man, riding rapidly over the prairie in circles, and gradually approaching the grove. As he came within hailing distance, he put his hand to his mouth, and gave vent to that peculiar yell that they had heard a short time before.

"Ugh!" exclaimed the Delaware. "'Spect he be white man, sure enough. You jump up and yell. Maybe so he know white man's voice."

David accordingly rose to his feet, and yelled at the top of his voice:

"Hal-loo-oo!" came clearly across the prairie, as the stranger drew nearer.

"Halloo, yourself!"

"Are you white or red?"

"White!"

The stranger slowly rode up to the grove, balancing his rifle upon his saddle before him, as if he thought it not possible to use too much caution. When he was near enough to distinguish the form, dress and features of David Carver, he slung his rifle, rode up quickly, and dismounted, giving his hand to the young man.

The new-comer was a handsome young fellow, seemingly about twenty-two or twenty-three years of age, with black, curling hair, black eyes, sun-browned complexion, and an open, manly expression of countenance. He rode a splendid horse, and was armed with a fine rifle, a pair of pistols, and a hunting-knife. He wore dressed buckskin leggings, with large boots, a stout homespun hunting-shirt, and a slouched hat. As he gave his hand to Carver, the Delaware rose up from the grass in which he had been concealed, and the stranger started back and laid his hand on his rifle.

"You needn't be scared at him, mister," said David, "for he is only a friendly Delaware, and belongs to our party

Where did you come from, and how did you happen to find us out?"

"I thought he was a Delaware," answered the stranger, "but I have been in this country, more or less, for several years, and have learned to be suspicious. My name is Frank Steele, and I belong to a party that is camped about a dozen miles from here. I was riding over the prairie, when I caught sight of your smoke, and naturally wanted to know who you were. I was quite sure that you were not Indians, for they would never have made such a smoke; but it is well to be cautious; so I fired a gun and gave a yell, to draw you out that I might see what you were made of. I was glad to learn, I assure you, that you are really white men, for I have understood that the Blackfeet are getting thick in these parts."

"Black Beaver knows Cap'n Steele," said the Delaware. "Good man, Cap'n Steele. Hope he is well."

"What! is this you, Black Beaver?" exclaimed the stranger. "It is a long time since I have met you. You and your friend must come over to our camp, for my father will be glad to see you, and it will be safer for you than traveling alone."

"I am glad to meet you, sir," said young Carver. "You must stop and make our camp a visit; for the sight of a white face in this wilderness will please our folks. You must be hungry, and I think there is some supper left; if no we can soon get some ready."

"Did Cap'n Frank see sign?" asked the Delaware.

"None at all. I hear that some bands of Blackfeet are prowling about, but have seen nothing to make me believe they are in this neighborhood."

"If he make no sign, then Black Beaver not much 'fraid," said the Indian, as he followed the two white men to the camp.

Frank Steele led his horse within the grove, and picketed it with the rest. He was duly made acquainted with Nathan Carver and the rest of the party, and, not strange to say, was so struck with the beauty of the bright-eyed and rosy-cheeked Ellen, that Eben Gookin felt it incumbent upon him to bend his brows, and glare at the new-comer as if he would take pleasure in harpooning him. His sour looks were all lost upon Steele who had put himself on good terms, in a very short

time, not only with the fair Ellen, but with the rest of the family.

Mrs. Carver soon had a fine buffalo-rib broiled, and some flour cakes baked over the coals, of which her handsome visitor ate heartily, declaring that the cooking exceeded any thing he had seen at his father's camp. This praise brought the blushes into the good lady's face, and was also grateful to Nathan Carver, who was always pleased when his wife was commended. When he had finished his supper, he produced his pipe, and conversed pleasantly with all, except Eben Gookin, who seemed determined to be as gruff and unpleasant as he knew how to be. The fact is, he had supposed, when he followed Ellen Carver into the wilderness, that he would have a monopoly of the young beauty, and would not be bothered and put out of countenance by any of the smooth-faced and well-dressed beaux who had so greatly disturbed his peace of mind in Massachusetts. He had, too, hoped that the girl, from sheer lack of other available young men, would be compelled to accept him as a suitor, and, in due course of time, as a husband. It was natural, therefore, that he should feel chagrined, and consider his rights invaded, when a handsome and evidently well-to-do young man, whose admiration of Ellen was so apparent, entered their quiet circle, and threatened to completely upset his calculations.

As soon as Steele saw Ellen Carver, and perceived how beautiful she was, how charming in every way, he immediately became very solicitous that Nathan Carver and his party should accompany him to the camp of Captain Steele, and travel with that expedition as far as it might go in their direction. He pictured the country as swarming with hostile Indians, who were daily increasing in numbers and audacity, and represented the attempt of so small a party to pass through there at that time, as hazardous in the extreme. His father, he said, was in command of a large party, which he had organized for trading and trapping purposes, and which was abundantly able to protect his new friends against all dangers. He was sure that they would be welcome, and he exhausted his eloquence in urging this project upon them, as one not only proper, but absolutely necessary for their safety. The plan struck Nathan Carver favorably, as he had reason

to believe there were hostile Indians in the neighborhood, and he feared for his dear ones. He had already regretted that he had undertaken such a long and perilous journey into the wilderness with such a small company, and was glad of a chance to place himself under the protection of a larger and more experienced party. His wife and daughter also were pleased with the idea, because they wished for company, and were impressed by the good looks and easy manners of the young stranger. David, also, favored the move, because he shared his father's fears; and the silence of the Delaware, as usual, gave token of assent.

The only voice that was raised in opposition was that of Eben Gookin, who denounced the proposition in a style that was very impolite toward Steele, and quite offensive to all.

"It jist seems to me," said he—"if you will allow a man to talk who has sailed the sea these seven year, and who ought to know somethin' of the world—that you are all runnin' crazy in a minnit. I always kalkilated, uncle Nathan, that you were a cool-headed, cautious, and slow-thinkin' man, not likely to rush off in this fashion, without lookin' two inches ahead of your nose. I don't wonder at cousin Ellen, who is always ready to start out after every thin' new that comes along, 'specially if it's in the shape of a young man or at Dave, who is young yet, and lackin' in experience; or at the Delaware, who cares precious little what becomes of us, so long as he gits his pay; but you, uncle Nathan, who have always been considered a kurful and kalkilatin' man—I wouldn't ever have thought that you could be led off in this way, and made to go to a place and people you don't know nothin' about. Who can tell who and what these folks are? Who can say that they ain't a band of thieves and pirates worse than any red Injuns? Here comes a feller, nobody knows who, loafin' in here, jist about nightfall, and you all want to run off after him, without stoppin' to ask whether he's an honest man or a rascal, and it's sart'in that he wouldn't be so anxious for you to go, if he didn't have some object into it."

"Sir!" exclaimed Frank Steele, who had been listening to this narangue with flushed face and angry eyes. "Do you mean to hint that my father and his party are a band of

thieves and pirates? Do you mean to insinuate that I am a rascal, and that I want to swindle these good people?"

"There, now! Jist you keep off, if you don't want to be speared with this here harpoon. You needn't lay your hand onto your pistol, for I can shoot this gun as fast as you can shoot that one. What I've said is said, and I'll leave it to uncle Nathan himself if there ain't reason into it. You needn't be castin' sheep's eyes towards the gal, 'cause she sin't got the say-so in this matter, and I—"

"Ha! ha! ha!" laughed Steele, who had been advancing upon the tall man in a threatening manner. "I see what it is that troubles you, and I forgive your rudeness. I can assure you, however, my impolite and unhandsome friend, that I have no evil designs against the young lady, and that she will be as safe under my protection as—youself."

Eben Gookin, now doubly indignant, raised his harpoon, and Ellen screamed, when the Delaware stepped between the young men, and pushed Eben back.

"Hush, fool!" said he. "There is no one crazy but you. Black Beaver knows Cap'n Steele. He is a good man. Cap'n Frank is a good man. It is enough; we will go. Hold your tongue, for may be so you have some other thing to think 'bout mighty soon. Black Beaver think he hear Injun. Cap'n Frank, you listen sharp."

All were instantly hushed into silence, for the Delaware spoke very earnestly. Young Steele threw himself upon the grass, and laid his ear to the ground. Directly, he started up, exclaiming:

"Get your guns! Take the women to cover! I believe the wood is alive with Indians!"

He had hardly spoken, when the little party was greeted with a shower of arrows, mingled with the discharge of two or three fusees. The white men knew that it was useless to fire at their unseen antagonists, and sought such cover as they could find. A second discharge of arrows followed, and the Indians rushed from their covert through the almost defenseless encampment. They had intended a surprise, which they effectually accomplished, and they were hardly seen, before they disappeared, as they had good reason to fear the rifles of the whites. It was, with them,

A moment in the camp,
A moment, and away!

Nathan Carver, who had just placed his wife within her wagon, was struck down by a tomahawk, as he turned to face the assailants. One Indian fell before the rifle of Black Beaver, and David Carver had just wounded another, when he was disabled by an arrow that stuck in his arm. Frank Steele turned to look for Ellen, and saw her seized and carried off by a stalwart savage. He hastened in pursuit, and was about to blow out the red-man's brains with his pistol, when he was knocked down from behind, and was instantly picked up and carried away, bruised and senseless. Eben Gookin, as soon as he could collect his scattered senses, also witnessed the capture of Ellen, and also went in pursuit, when his way was stopped by an Indian, who advanced upon him with uplifted tomahawk. As quick as thought, the long whaler raised his harpoon, and hurled it through the body of his antagonist, stretching him lifeless upon the earth. As the barbed instrument could not be immediately extricated, he found himself weaponless, until the savages were beyond sight and hearing.

As pursuit was impracticable, the little party took an account of their losses, and found them to be as follows: Nathan Carver was severely hurt, and David was slightly wounded. A few of the horses were wounded, more or less severely, and, what was worse than all, Ellen Carver and Frank Steele had been carried off as prisoners. The Delaware examined the bodies of the slain, and declared that they belonged to a band of those dreaded enemies of the white man, the Blackfeet.

Without more delay, the horses were hitched to the wagons, in one of which Nathan Carver was placed, and the diminished band, sad and dispirited, started out, under the guidance of Black Beaver, to seek the protection of Captain Steele's camp. They reached it in safety, and the Delaware, accompanied by Eben Gookin, immediately hastened back to the scene of their bloody surprise, to find and follow the trail of the Blackfeet.

CHAPTER IV.

STRIPPED OF HIS HONORS.

AFTER the pleasant moonlight walk, which was followed by the encounter with the fierce and wrinkled old As-moo-tah, Kotselo and his Star-in-the-grass, as he called the pretty La-la, did not meet for a while. The young wife of the Fat Bear remained in her lodge, listening, as patiently as she could, to the threats and imprecations of the hag, and bemoaning her unhappy condition. Kotselo wandered about, like a lost and copper-colored spirit, nursing his wrath against Nip-muck-we, and wondering how poor La-la fared in her seclusion.

The second morning after that eventful evening, brought the return of Nip-muck-we and the young men who had accompanied him, ostensibly for a hunt, but really to waylay, rob and murder some small or detached party of emigrants or traders. They returned, but the warriors did not enter the village, remaining at a short distance from the lodges, throwing their weapons upon the ground, and standing in mournful silence, waiting to be invited to their homes. Evidently, there was something wrong, for, if the expedition had been entirely successful, the Fat Bear and his party would have poured triumphantly into the village, uttering yells and shouts of exultation, and boastfully displaying the scalps that they had taken.

This was no indication, however, that they had not achieved a notable victory, for, according to the Blackfeet custom, although an expedition might have been very successful, still, if a warrior had fallen, his death cast a cloud over the affair, and his companions considered themselves personally responsible for his loss, never returning to their lodges until invited to do so by his relatives.

The entire population, men, women and children, went out to meet the returning braves, with doleful forebodings of ill-luck. The extent of the calamity was soon made known:—

two men had been slain, and another was brought home severely wounded. Nip-muck-we had surprised an emigrant camp, but had not reaped the entire fruits of his victory, for he had lost two of his men, through lack of generalship on his own part. Although he had found the camp unguarded, he had found its inmates wide awake, and had met with warm reception. He had, also, overrated their strength, or he might have exterminated the party.

Then ensued a scene which baffles description. The women and children, especially the relatives of the deceased, tore their hair and garments, cast away their tinsel ornaments, and filled the air with such horrible screechings and howlings, as could only have been heard in Bedlam, in the days of chains and dungeons. The crestfallen warriors stood motionless, with downcast heads and sorrowful countenances, until the clamor at last subsided, when they were taken by the hand and invited to enter the village.

They had brought home two prisoners, a young man and a beautiful girl, who, as may be surmised, were none other than Frank Steele and Ellen Carver. The grief-stricken women demanded that these should be instantly immolated, to appease the manes of their fallen relatives; but the chief had no idea of putting to death such a handsome girl as Ellen, and he told the people that he would reserve Frank for the present, until their revenge could be made complete. Accordingly, the girl was taken to a lodge, where she was carefully guarded, and young Steele was ignominiously tied to a tree, to be cursed, jeered at and vexed, by the angry old women and their imps of children.

Nip-muck-we returned in a very bad humor. Indeed, the Fat Bear might well have been termed, that morning, the Bear-with-a-sore-head, for he was as cross and uncomfortable as any unfortunate bruin that ever climbed for a honeycomb and excited the indignation of the belligerent bees. As soon as he had performed his pressing duties as chief, he listened eagerly to old As-moo-tah's account, told with abundant exaggerations, of the meeting between Kotsclo and La-la, after which, he entered the lodge of the offending female, and had a stormy time, judging by what could be heard on the outside. He could not, like a civilized human, break the dishes,

stamp on his wife's jewelry, and throw her poodle dog out of the window, because there were no fragile dishes, no jewelry, and no poodle dog appertaining to the lodge; but he scolded her vigorously in the Blackfeet dialect, pulled her hair, tore off her ornaments of brass and tinsel, and ended by striking her such a violent blow in the face, that it knocked her senseless.

This exhibition of passion did not tend to put him in any better humor with himself or the rest of Indiankind, and it might have been supposed that he would soon come into collision with Kotselo; but, he did nothing of the kind. The fact is, the Fat Bear, who had grown so fat that he was almost unmanageable, was something of a coward, and he well knew that he would come off second best, in case of a personal conflict with the young and active warrior. Therefore, he preferred to wait, expecting to secure his revenge in some other manner.

Kotselo, in common with other warriors, felt that the village had been disgraced, as well as injured, by the manner in which the chief had conducted his expedition, and he burned to avenge the death of his comrades, and retrieve the lost laurels of the band. He was ardent and fond of adventure, and anxious to distinguish himself on the war-path, and was already known and honored as a skillful leader, as well as a brave and successful warrior.

He did not waste time in thought, but as soon as the first fierce ebullition of grief had subsided, and the noise of the lamentations had died away, he went to his tent, arrayed himself in his war-paint and costume, mounted his best horse, bearing a long pole with a red flag at the end, and the tip trimmed with eagles' feathers, and rode around among the lodges, singing his war-song.

This was the Blackfeet method of drumming up recruits for a war-party, and Kotselo's peripatetic enlistment office was eminently successful, for warrior after warrior mounted his horse and fell into his train, all continuing the march among the lodges, and singing the war-song, until he had at his command a dozen of the best and bravest young men in the village.

The red-plumed warrior, as the one who had organized the party, was its rightful leader, and those who had enlisted under

him were entirely willing to be commanded by him, for they had the highest respect for his courage and sagacity, and they longed to distinguish themselves, as well as to bring home scalps to hang in the deserted lodges of the fallen.

Kotselo, having completed his company, made them a little speech, after the manner of a militia brigadier, and went to his lodge to procure his weapons, and make other preparations for the expedition. He was gone only a short time, but when he returned, he found his followers grouped together in silence, and casting upon him compassionate looks as he approached. His horse was gone, and its warlike accouterments were scattered on the ground.

The mystery was soon explained : Nip-muck-we, the chief, had taken possession of the young warriors' horses, including the animal that was to bear him on the expedition, and had turned them in among his own, thus appropriating them to himself.

It was enough ! a young and ambitious warrior could hardly be more thoroughly disgraced. No Major-General, relieved of command on the eve of an important campaign, which he had planned and matured with the greatest care, could feel the indignity more acutely than this red-skinned commander of twelve men. Kotselo felt as if he could give vent to his mortification and disappointment in a burst of tears, but it would never do for a warrior to exhibit such weakness. He controlled his feelings, and walked away, with proud but sorrowful bearing. He could not help himself ; the chief might do as he pleased, and was irresponsible ; there was no law of replevin in the wilderness.

He went to his lodge, washed off his paint, laid aside all his war-costume and ornaments, except his long, red plume, and strolled sadly out into the timber, where he sat down under a tree, to commune with his own bitter thoughts.

The motive of the chief was plain : he wished to humiliate the young warrior, and punish him for the tender feelings that he was supposed to entertain for La-la. He had taken the meanest, as well as easiest and most effectual means of accomplishing this object, and Kotselo deeply felt the disgrace that had been so wrongfully cast upon him. He was an unhorsed and dishonored warrior ; all the deeds by which he had gained

distinction would count for nothing; all that he might thereafter do would not restore him to his position in the tribe; his foot could not be set upon the war-path, nor could his voice be heard by the council-fire. As far as the objects which alone have value in the eyes of an Indian are concerned, he was a ruined man, and his life seemed worthless to him. While he sat and brooded over his wrongs, he inwardly resolved that he would not be a dog or a squaw among the Blackfeet, but would leave them, and seek refuge in some hostile tribe, where his manly virtues would be properly appreciated. Benedict Arnold in his moments of passion, thought that he was justified, when he betrayed his country for far less cause; can the ignorant Indian be blamed for resolving not to submit to unmerited degradation, and for becoming a renegade?

He had hardly formed this resolution, when he saw La-la approaching along the forest-path. She had a bundle of sticks on her shoulder, and her face was bound up with an ominous bandage. In an instant, all the love that he really felt for her rushed to his heart like a revelation, and flew from his heart to his lips and eyes. He then knew that his affection was not such as it had been when she was the companion of his childhood—that he did not love her as a sister, but with such passion as can exist only between man and woman.

"Has the Fat Bear made her his drudge?" he angrily thought. "Must she bring wood and water, and carry burdens, and work like any common squaw? It is too bad; the daughter of a great warrior should not be treated so meanly. Why is that bandage on her face? Has she fallen, or has that dog beaten her? She shall suffer no longer. I will leave the Blackfeet and she shall go with me. We will go where I can love her and take care of her."

He ran to meet her, and startled her by the earnestness with which he seized her hand and snatched the bundle of sticks from her shoulder.

"What does this mean, my Star-in-the-grass?" he asked. "Does Nip-muck-we force you to carry bundles, like a common squaw? What is the matter with your face? Has the Bear struck you with his claws?"

With many tears, and in a trembling voice, La-la told how she had been abused and ill treated by the chief, and how he

had struck her to the earth. The young warrior clenched his hands, and ground his teeth as he listened.

"He shall never do so again!" he exclaimed, in tones that were rendered harsh by passion. "You shall fly with me, La-la, and we will soon be far beyond his reach. He has done me a great wrong to-day. I had collected the bravest of our young men, and was about to lead them on the war-path, when Nip-muck-we took my horses and placed them with his own, and called them his. What could I do? He is a chief, and I could not say a word. He means to disgrace me, and to make me a squaw where I have been a warrior. But I will bear it no longer; I will fly to some other tribe, where I will be free, and where a warrior is not treated as a child. You shall fly with me, my Star-in-the-grass, and the Fat Bear shall never touch you with his cruel claws again. Are you ready? Shall we go to-night?"

La-la only replied to this earnest appeal by covering her face with her hands, and bursting into tears.

"Speak to me!" implored Kotselo. "Let us go, and you will be happy at last, and will carry no more burdens for Nip-muck-we."

"Kotselo may go," sobbed La-la, as if heartbroken. "He must go, but La-la must stay."

"Think how he has abused you, what blows he has given you, and follow me where you will be loved and treated with kindness."

"Kotselo may go; La-la must stay," answered the weeping woman, as she took up her bundle of sticks and walked toward her lodge.

The young warrior folded his arms, and looked after her in gloomy silence until she was out of sight.

CHAPTER V.

AN ORIGINAL CHARACTER.

THERE was a gay and glorious time in the camp of Captain Steele, during the day on which his son, Frank, started on the scouting expedition which ultimately brought him within the Blackfeet village as a prisoner. A large band of friendly Indians, of the Nêz Percé, or Pierced Nose tribe, with their wives and children, had recently encamped in the neighborhood, and, as they still retained a quantity of their last season's peltries, and promised to be useful during the ensuing campaign, the captain hoped to drive a profitable trade with them. They were quiet, peaceable, well-meaning Indians, whose chief faults were their great curiosity, and their propensity to beg.

Captain Benjamin Steele was a Missourian, about fifty years of age, strong, healthy and good-natured. He had been in the fur-trading business for many years, and had accumulated quite a fortune, but he still clung to it, from love of the excitement and adventure which it afforded. His most prominent trait was, an overpowering love for his son, Frank, whom he had brought up to the same business, and who took to it, the captain said, as naturally as a beaver takes to water.

Captain Steele had been still more overjoyed, that morning, by the arrival of a party of free trappers, who came to the camp riding at full speed, firing their guns, yelling and whooping, and acting as much like wild Indians as it was possible for white men to act.

They were a strange and motley crew, and made even Captain Steele and his experienced hunters, half-breeds and Delawares, open their eyes to the widest extent. If he could secure the services of these roving blades during the ensuing season, the captain felt that he would have a great advantage over all other trading competitors; therefore, he used his utmost endeavors to propitiate them and keep them at his camp. They were real gamecocks of the wilderness, who all thought

themselves a head and shoulders above the "pork-eaters" from the States. They were dressed in great variety of costume, all of them imitating the Indian style to a great extent, or exaggerating upon it most outrageously. They were extremely free and easy with Captain Steele, and with all the members of his command to whom they considered it worth their while to speak. All were ready to purchase any thing and every thing, and the captain, who was well supplied with the proper goods for such traffic, opened his bales, and was soon busy, with his assistants, in supplying their manifold wants. Money or no money, it made no difference to them; they were bound to have what they wanted, and the captain was glad enough to supply them, in consideration of securing their services for the coming trapping season. They purchased largely, articles that were useful, articles that were ornamental, and articles that were neither, and scattered their purchases lavishly among the Indian women of the neighboring camp, who, learning that a party of these gay and festive sons of the mountain had arrived, came thronging over to see them, and to pick up some of the prizes that they were always ready to distribute. Some of the trappers had their Indian wives with them, and it was noticeable that they made very few presents to the other women, and the few that they made were given very slyly and fearfully. Could it be possible that the gamecocks of the wilderness were henpecked?

The trappers brought with them tales of Indian "sign" that they had seen at several points along their route, and reports of large bodies of Blackfeet that were gathering at the westward and southward, for the purpose of molesting the trappers, trading parties, and Indians friendly to the whites. The new-comers, however, were not themselves troubled or excited by the reports that they had brought; they had joined themselves to a strong party, and had no fear of any attack; it was yet some time before the trapping season would commence, and it was one of their mottoes that "sufficient for the day is the evil thereof." Captain Steele did not feel as easy on the subject as his new allies did, and his son, Frank, sharing the apprehensions of his father, judged it best to undertake a reconnoitering expedition, for the purpose of visiting a *cliche*, and learning whether it had been disturbed; and of

inquiring into the truth of the report that hostile Indians were in the neighborhood. As has been seen, it was not long before he discovered, by unpleasant experience, that the report was true.

That night, in order still further to conciliate his new friends, and to gain their good-will, Captain Steele gave a grand "blow-out," at which large amounts of alcohol and honey and unlimited quantities of buffalo-meat, were disposed of, greatly to the satisfaction of all concerned. The trappers voted Captain Steele a "jolly good fellow," and they "walked into" the eatables and drinkables, in the style of men who had undertaken to eat and drink as much as possible in the shortest possible time. The result was, a vast deal of noise, boasting and rhodomontade, and a few private fights. The affair passed off in a reasonably quiet manner, however, the influence of Captain Steele being sufficient to prevent the occasional encounters from spreading until they attained the proportions of a general or "free" fight, and nearly all had settled down upon the ground, before daybreak, to sleep off the effects of their exertions and their strong potations.

There was one free and independent trapper present, who, as a type of his class, and as being intimately connected with this tale, deserves a slight description. He was not one of the gay and rollicking party that had arrived in the morning, but had been traveling with Captain Steele for nearly two weeks, and had been intimately acquainted with him for years. In dress, habits and disposition, however, he was as much a roving son of the mountains as any of them. Bill Bush was a man of about forty-five years of age, rather short and stout, active and athletic, and the proprietor of a very sharp pair of eyes, and of a nose which, as he boasted, could smell an Indian trail or a beaver-track a mile off. He was dressed in a long, leather hunting-skirt, reaching to the knee, curiously stamped, and ornamented with a profusion of bright colors and with gaudy fringes on the collar and sleeves; loosely fitting leggings, fringed with particolored ribbon, and ornamented with miniature bells; moccasins of the best quality, quaintly embroidered with beads by the careful hands of some Indian woman; a belt of scarlet leather, in which were placed a fine pair of pistols, a glittering knife, and an Indian pipe; and a neat cap

of beaver-skin, turned up at the edges, and surmounted by a circlet of eagle's feathers. His black hair was allowed to grow to great length, and those portions immediately behind his ears were carefully plaited and adorned with ribbons. When it is added that his rifle was also highly ornamented, and that his black horse was strangely streaked with white, and covered with a profusion of feathers, gewgaws, and other grotesque trappings, we have a tolerably accurate picture of this dandy of the wilderness, who was also a perfectly finished trapper and hunter. It is not to be supposed that he did not sometimes moult his fine feathers during his long and solitary trapping excursions; but it is certain that he always renewed them during the summer seasons, when he visited trading camps for the purpose of selling his peltries, procuring supplies, making a display of himself, and having a grand carouse.

Billy Bush had noticed, with feelings of envy, as well as of admiration, the wives of the free trappers, most of them quite good-looking, who, splendidly attired in their fine robes, and covered with a great variety of dazzling ornaments, were gracefully prancing and dashing about on their gayly caparisoned steeds, the long braids of their hair streaming out on the breeze "with a perfect looseness." He admired these belles of the wilderness, who looked and acted as if they owned their lords and all the rest of creation, and regretfully thought of the time when he had called himself the proprietor of such a red-skinned beauty, who loved and ruled him, and whom he was glad and proud to supply with all articles of personal adornment that suited her wayward fancy, and that he could possibly procure in the wilderness. When he was full of eating and drinking, he felt that he could not be satisfied, unless he procured another wife very soon. With this idea uppermost in his head, he sought Captain Steele, and stated his intention.

"All right," said the captain, "if you can find a wife to suit you. There are plenty of Néz Percé girls, and you have only to speak to the chief, who will deliver to you whichever one you may take a fancy to. If you want any presents, for the girl or her folks, just call on me, and I'll fit you out."

"Tain't that, cap'n," replied the trapper. "Ef a gal takes

a notion to hang onto this hoss, she and her folks will hev' to wait for presents till I git ready to give 'em. I know how to manage the critters, for I've been hitched afore, to a gal what these yere uns wasn't a gopher-hide to her beaver-skin. I hed to leave her once, bein' I was goin' into a kentry as was dangerous-like, and I was gone so long, that she 'lowed I'd been rubbed out, and hitched herself to another chap. But that's neither yere nor thar'. I don't want one of these 'ere Nepercys gals, 'cause the Nepercys are blamed cowards, 'cordin' to my way of thinkin', and I don't mean to hev' none of that sort hangin' about me. The fact is, Cap'n Steele, I'm goin' to light out in the mornin', and I mean to hunt a Blackfeet camp somewhar', and pick me a good gal outen that lot, a gal what don't come of a sneakin' stock."

"A Blackfeet camp!" exclaimed the captain. "You had better be careful what you do, or you may get yourself into trouble, for the Blackfeet won't let a white man live nowadays, if they can get his scalp."

"They won't be apt to scare this hoss, cap'n, and I hain't no call to be afeard of 'em, 'cause I know thar' ways, and they know me too well to try to lift my ha'r. Besides, they'll jest jump at the chance of gettin' one of thar' gals slung alongside of Bill Bush, who's as good a hunter and trapper as thar' is in these parts."

"Very well, Bill; you know your own business best, and I will not pretend to advise you. I can only wish you good luck, and hope that we may see you safe back again."

Captain Steele wondered that Frank did not return, but he was not uneasy about him, as the young man was experienced in life in the wilds, and had often been absent from the camp for days at a time. Before daylight, however, the remnant of Nathan Carver's party, led by Black Beaver, arrived at the camp, and told the tale of the night attack of the Blackfeet, in which Ellen Carver and Frank Steele had been captured, and carried off.

Captain Steele was highly indignant, and oppressed with anxiety, for he knew that the savages would show no mercy to his son, especially if they discovered who he was. He wished to form a party immediately, to go in pursuit of the marauders; but his men and their new friends had not yet

slept off the effects of their carouse, and he was dissuaded from hasty action by Bill Bush.

"It seems strange," said the trapper, "how the boy could hev' been picked up that a-way, fur I taught him Injun ways and Injur. fightin'; and yet, it ain't so strange, either, 'cause he was caught in new company, and, what's vuss, along with a gal. That's what gits a man inter scrapes. This hoss be lieves—come to think it over—that he won't tie on to another woman jest yet, when thar's sech a good chance of gittin' his ha'r lifted. I will start out right away, cap'n, and look arter the Blackfeet. That thar' Delaware and a Yankee chap hev' gone to hunt the trail, and it will be strange if some of us don't bring you news afore long. I must say that I don't feel afeard about the boy, 'cause he's up to trap like an old beaver, and it will take a smart Injun to git ahead of him. You ken send out sech men as you want to, but, so far as this hoss is concerned, he allows to travel alone."

Just as the day began to dawn, Bush mounted his horse and left the camp, his rifle resting on the saddle before him, and his two bright eyes taking in the whole expanse of prairie as he rode.

CHAPTER VI.

*THE RENEGADE.

KOTSELO, after La-la had left him, stood for some time with his arms folded, lost in thought, and a prey to powerful emotions. He knew that he was ruined and degraded as a warrior, and conceived that she for whom he now confessed such an absorbing love, had forsaken him and cast him off in the hour of his trouble. He knew not what to do, but he felt reckless, and ready to seize the first desperate chance that might offer.

In this frame of mind, he returned to the village, and was informed that he had been appointed to guard the prisoner, Frank Steele, during the night. The young warrior felt that this was an additional indignity, a species of drudgery that

was put upon him by Nip-muck-we, for the purpose of humiliating him and lowering him in his own estimation and in that of the tribe. Nevertheless, he went to his station, sullenly and in silence, and thought how he could best take revenge for the insults that had been heaped upon him.

Frank Steele was sitting under an oak, with his hands and feet securely tied, and his body bound to the trunk of the tree. His position had been an unpleasant one, and his suffering had been increased by the continual annoyance of the old women and children, who had amused themselves by spitting in his face, pinching his skin, striking him with sticks, and wreaking their spite in every practicable way. He had also been assured that he would certainly be put to death on the morrow, the chief having consented that the friends of those who had been slain should then satisfy their vengeance. Escape was impossible, as he could not loosen his limbs from their bonds; certain death stared him in the face. Notwithstanding this gloomy prospect, he felt relieved when the crowd of ugly women and screaming children had left him, and endeavored to forget his pains and troubles in sleep. He had sunk into a doze when Kotselo came to take the place of the Indian who had been standing guard over him.

The red-plumed warrior, seeing that the prisoner was sleeping, and that he was securely bound, took no further notice of him, but walked aside among the trees, with folded arms, commanding with his own thoughts. The passions of love and revenge were sufficient to fill his breast, to the exclusion of every thing else.

The prisoner and his guard were on a wooded knoll, one of the first of the waves in which the land rolled back from the valley to the open prairie. Below them, a piece of meadow land, dotted with tall trees, stretched to the river. In the meadow a number of horses were picketed, some of them grazing, and some lying down. The night was clear, although there was no moon, and objects below could easily be distinguished.

As Kotselo paced his lonely round, gazing dreamily at the shining surface of the river, he noticed a man walking among the horses. Thinking it strange that any one should be there at that hour, he stepped to the brow of the little hill, and

looked more carefully. As he did so, a thrill passed through him, for he thought that he recognized his bitter enemy, the chief Nip-muck-we. Partly descending the hill, he gained a closer view, and was convinced that his impression was correct. Yes; there was no mistaking the ungainly form and waddling gait of the Fat Bear, who was moving slowly about, examining the horses, and muttering to himself.

The heart of Kotselo grew hot, and his dark eyes gleamed, as he watched the destroyer of his fame. What an opportunity to take an ample revenge for the wrongs that he had suffered at the hands of the chief, and for the wrongs that La-la had suffered! As he thought of the bandaged face of his Star-in-the-grass, and thought of the ignominious position in which he had been placed by the envious and jealous Bear, his indignation became more fierce, and he laid his hand upon his knife, as he crouched in the shade of a tree. It needed but a little more provocation to whet his appetite for revenge, and impel the crouching tiger to make his spring ; and that provocation was soon supplied.

The chief shortly came to a horse which Kotselo recognized as one of his own, as the animal which was to bear him on the war-path that day, and of which he had been so unceremoniously deprived. On this horse Nip-muck-we laid his hands, stroking it as if he felt the pride of ownership. The heart of the red-plumed warrior took fire in an instant ; he clutched his knife with a tighter grasp, and glided down into the meadow under the cover of the trees. Then he stole quietly along, mingling with the animals, and crouching, at times, on the grass, until he reached the horse by which the chief was standing. After a moment's hesitation, he rushed upon him with his knife. Two blows were sufficient to complete the bloody work, and the Fat Bear fell to the ground with a groan. Satisfied that he had secured his revenge, the young warrior hastily collected some branches and grass, with which he covered the body of Nip-muck-we, and then sped back to the village.

Reaching the lodge that was occupied by La-la, he put aside the folds of skin hanging over the entrance, and saw the red-skinned beauty seated, with her face buried in her hands, and weeping bitterly. This sight fired his blood still more.

and caused him to feel better satisfied with the retribution (a just one, as he deemed it) that he had visited on her husband and persecutor.

Making a slight noise, to attract the attention of La-la, he beckoned to her, quickly and eagerly, for he dared not speak, as old As-moo-tah was sleeping in the lodge. La-la started, and looked up at him with a wondering stare, seeming, for a moment, frightened and irresolute. But there was something in the expression of his bright eyes, and in his earnest, appealing gesture, that compelled her to rise and go to meet him, whether she wished to or not. As soon as she was outside the tent, he seized both her hands, and led her to a secluded spot, a short distance from the lodges, where he spoke to her in low but ardent and impassioned tones.

"My Star-in-the-grass is free to fly with me now," he said, "for the Fat Bear is dead, and will never trouble her any more. I said that he should never strike La-la again, and my words were true, for my knife has slain him this night. I saw him walking among my horses, the horses that he had taken from me. I thought how he had wronged me, how he had sought to change a warrior into a squaw ; I thought how he had wronged my Star-in-the-grass, how he had beaten her, as if she was a dog ; my heart was hot, and blood was before my eyes. I leaped upon him, and struck him down with my knife, and he will trouble us no more, for he is dead. I must fly now, and have come to say to La-la that she must fly with me. Come; we have no time to lose, for we must be far from the village before the morning dawns.

The red-skinned beauty made no answer, but hung her head, and wept bitterly.

"I have done nothing wrong," protested Kotselo. "It was an act of justice. The Great Spirit struck the Fat Bear by my hand. I have shed blood, but it was justly shed. Come, my Star-in-the-grass ; this is no place for us now ; let us hasten to fly."

"No, no, no," sobbed La-la, as she hid her face in her hands. "Kotselo must fly, for the avengers of blood will be on his trail ; but I can not go."

The young warrior folded his arms, and gazed at her mournfully but proudly, as he turned away.

"Then Kotselo will go alone," he said. "The avengers of blood will be on my trail, and I shall not care if they slay me, for I shall be alone. You will live, and will be safe, but I will die, and you will forget me."

As he slowly walked away, La-la removed her hand from her face, threw back her streaming hair, and, with a wild cry, rushed to his side.

"Kotselo shall not go alone!" she exclaimed. "Wherever he goes I will go. If the avengers of blood slay him, they must slay me also. I am ready."

Pressing her to his breast for a moment, the young warrior took her hand, and hastened in the direction of the meadow in which the horses were pastured. When he reached the knoll from which he had first seen the chief walking among the horses, and came to the tree to which Frank Steele was bound, a sudden thought seemed to strike him, and he stepped up to the prisoner, and quickly cut his thongs.

Frank was asleep when the red-man returned, but woke in surprise as soon as he was freed of his painful and inconvenient bonds. He stared at the warrior, but could not comprehend the meaning of this strange proceeding.

"Come with me," said Kotselo. "You are free. Be quick. Horses are below, and you must lose no time."

Young Steele then understood that, by some strange dispensation, a friend had been raised up to him among his enemies, that his life was to be spared, and he was to be released from captivity. As he rose to his feet, and stretched his cramped limbs, he thought of his fellow-prisoner, pretty Ellen Carver, and felt that he could not go, and leave her in the power of the savages.

"I do not know what this means," he said, "but I thank you, and am glad to go. But there is a young lady here, who was taken captive and brought to the village with me. If I can see her, and take her to her parents, it will be far better than saving my own life."

"Kotselo does not know where she is," replied the Indian, "and we have no time to seek her. I have killed the chief, and the avengers of blood will soon be on my trail. You may fly with us, and we may be safe; if you stay here, you can not help the white maiden, and you will die."

Steele stood for a few moments, looking around irresolutely, and then concluded that the Indian was right, that he could do nothing, single-handed, to aid Ellen, but could only make his escape, and bring a strong force to her rescue.

"You speak truly," said he. "Lead on, and I will follow."

Swiftly and silently, and still holding the hand of La-la, the young warrior hastened down to the plain, where the horses were grazing quietly. Selecting two of the finest, he placed the young woman on one of them, and mounted the other himself, while Steele also made his choice from among them.

As soon as they were mounted, they rode down the bank of the stream for a short distance, guiding their horses with the picket ropes, and then struck off into the open prairie.

For hours they rode on in silence, or nearly so, very few words being spoken between them. The Indian woman was quietly happy in feeling that she was free, and that her lover was safe from pursuit; Kotselo meditated about his love and his revenge; and Frank Steele was entirely occupied with thoughts of pretty Ellen Carver, whom he had been compelled to leave behind in the power of the red-men. There was no help for it, however, and he consoled himself with the thought that they would not be likely to injure her, and that he might soon be able to effect her release.

They rode rapidly, desiring to put as much distance as possible between themselves and those who might be pursuing. Steele had taken his bearings carefully, and guided the party in what he supposed to be the direction of his father's camp. They often looked back, to watch for signs of pursuit, but they saw no human being on the broad prairie, until the sun was nearly two hours high. Then an exclamation from Kotselo attracted their attention to a small speck that was slowly approaching them, from the direction in which they were proceeding.

As it drew nearer, they made it out to be a mounted man, and they began to think of their safety. It was only one man, to be sure, but they were bound to consider every one they met as an enemy, until he proved the contrary, and they had no arms, with the exception of Kotselo's bow and

towns. They edged away, therefore, toward a piece of timber, but the stranger had seen them, and turned his horse in the same direction. It was evident that he was as desirous of making their acquaintance as they were to avoid making his.

As his intention was plain, and it was useless to try to escape from him, they rode toward him, and Steele soon had the satisfaction of assuring his companions that, although he was dressed like an Indian, and looked like one, he was probably a white man. The stranger, who had been approaching them warily, and with his rifle ready for instant action, perceived that there was a white man in the party, and rode up to them. The recognition, on both sides, was instantaneous and cordial.

"What! Bill Bush!" exclaimed Steele. "Where are you steering for, old boy? We have met you just at the right time, as I am afraid I could not have found the way to camp, and haven't as much as a popgun for defense."

"Hello, Cap'n Frank! Tell ye what, this old hoss is mighty glad to set his eyes onto you ag'in. I had jest started out on yer trail, and was gittin' my mad up, so as to feel like rubbin' out a few Blackfeet, when I run onto you. How did you git away from the red-skins?"

"By the help of my copper-colored friend here, and glad enough I was, too, for they had promised to serve me up without sauce this morning."

"Thuruer! Hello, Red Plume! what brought you here? Hev' ye been desertin' yer colors? How is it ye happened to save the life of a white man, and that man Cap'n Frank Steele?"

As briefly as possible, and speaking in the Blackfeet tongue, the young warrior told his tragic tale, and the trapper, though usually very stoical, could not conceal his astonishment.

"Wa-al, this passes!" he exclaimed. "So that thar' is the chief's wife, and he has gone dead. Human natur' is human natur', all the world over, I reckon, but an Injun's natur' is a leetle more so. It's lucky fur you, Red Plume, that you ain't in the settlements, 'cause I've hearn tell that they hang folks for sech jobs. But the Fat Bear was a mighty mean Injun, and he ain't no loss to nobody. I had 'lowed to travel 'round among some of the Blackfeet villages, and hunt me up a wife,

but I reckon I'll leave the critturs alone, for women is mighty unsart'in, and awful apt to git a man into scrapes. Come along, Cap'n Frank; we ain't fur from the camp, and I will soon take you to it."

"A young lady was captured by the same party that took me," said Steele, "and I was obliged to leave her among the Indians. Do you think they will hurt her?"

"Another woman! Thar's more trouble. I wonder wha the blamed, good-lookin', deceivin' critters was made fur, any how. As fur hurtin' her, that will depend on sarcumstances. Ef they feel in the humor, they will, and p'raps, ag'in, they won't.

"I must go back and rescue her, Bill Bush, at all hazards, as soon as I can get some arms. Will you go with me?"

"I was jest keen to sw'ar that ye'd be gittin' into some scrape along of that gal, and be draggin' me into it, too. I reckon ye won't 'low to go 'fore ye've seen the old man, who has been half crazy 'bout ye. Hurry up, now, and we will talk that matter over when we git to camp."

The party then rode on quite rapidly, until they reached the camp of Captain Steele, who was greatly rejoiced at the safe return of his son. Kotselo, or Red Plume, with his blood-bought wife (for such he now considered her), went to the neighboring Néz Percé village, where he was kindly received and adopted into the tribe.

CHAPTER VII.

WHALING ASHORE.

BLACK BEAVER and Eben Gookin only remained at Captain Steele's camp long enough to get some provisions to carry with them, and started out to find and follow the trail of the marauding Blackfeet. The Delaware was not pleased with the idea of having the great, green whaler for a companion, and would much rather have undertaken the expedition alone; but Eben was not to be put off or left behind. His affection for

his fair cousin, uncouth as it was, was genuine and earnest, and he was by no means lacking in physical or moral courage. He was resolved to attempt her rescue, whatever dangers might be in his way, and Black Beaver was obliged to accept his company with as good a grace as he could. He was armed only with a pair of pistols and his formidable harpoon, refusing a rifle, as he declared that he "couldn't git used to the vernal thing, by no manner of means."

Black Beaver and his long comrade returned, in as direct a line as possible, to their camping-ground of the previous night, in order to take up the trail of the savages at the beginning. David Carver was anxious to go with them, but he was obliged to attend his father, who had been severely hurt, and his own wound had proved quite troublesome.

When the Delaware and the Yankee reached the pleasant grove, they found the bodies of two Indians who had been killed in the brief conflict, still untouched by wolves or buzzards. Black Beaver had already secured their scalps, and neither he nor Eben felt sufficiently merciful to bury the bodies; so they pressed on in search of the trail. That was easily found, as the ground had been considerably trampled by the savages in their hasty exit, and as a few scraps of Ellen's light garments had been left upon bushes and twigs, when she was borne hurriedly along.

Once found, the trail was easily followed, through the thick grass and over the soft ground of the prairie, for a heavy dew had fallen during the night of the attack, and the Blackfeet had taken no pains to hide the traces of their course. Neither of the pursuers was mounted, for the Delaware considered that horses would be an impediment, rather than an assistance, on such a scout, and the Yankee vowed that it was impossible for him to keep his balance on such a rough-riding craft. So they ran along the trail, in a sort of dog-trot, Black Beaver in advance, with his keen eyes fixed on the ground, and Eben wondering how he could find his way in that trackless prairie without a compass.

They continued to travel in this manner until they reached a small stream, when Eben declared that he was tired and hungry, and could go no further until he was rested and fed. Black Beaver offered no objection to this, as he

discovered that they had lost the trail, and he was, consequently, willing to wait and consider before hunting it up. Their stock of dried buffalo-meat and hard bread was produced, and both ate heartily, washing down their repast with the clear water of the stream. When the Yankee had finished, he felt much braver, as well as stronger, and declared his intention of independently slaying a large number of Blackfeet, and bearing his bright-eyed cousin home in triumph. For such a deed of valor, he was sure that she could do no less than reward him with her fair hand.

"Wa-al, Beaver," said he, "this job is finished, and all we've got to do is jist to git ahead."

"Ugh! Mighty well to say git 'head; but where go?"

"I calkilate the pesky critters have crossed the creek."

"Maybe so, but where cross? Maybe so not cross. Black Beaver lost trail."

"Lost the trail! Wa-al, it seems tarnation queer to me, that you could foller 'em this far, with no compass or stars, no course or bearin's; and then be stopped by such a leetle creek as this. I'll jist throw my mind into this subjick, and see what I can make of it."

So saying, the Yankee, followed by the Delaware, walked slowly down the edge of the stream, looking carefully and anxiously at the clear water. Soon he stopped, and pointed to a round stone in the middle of the brook.

"Look-a-there, Mister Beaver. There's been mud onto that rock once, but some of it has been scraped off."

"Injun foot never did that," answered the Delaware.

"Wa-al, I calkilate there ain't any fish in these parts that would be likely to do it. Look yonder, further down-stream, and you'll see a stick standin' up out of the bottom. It don't stand to reason that stick got there by accident. The Injuns have been tryin' to fool us, but that young upstart of a white man has left us a sign or two. Now, Beaver, if you'll jist look over on t'other side, I calkilate you'll conclude they've gone across."

The Delaware looked at the spot that was pointed out to him, and saw a cleft stick lying on the shore, with the end pointing up the bank.

"Black Beaver sees," said he. "Cap'n Frank did that"

"As that p'int is settled, we will jist git across, and then you can 'tend to the land navigation."

They waded the shallow stream, and walked up the bank where the Delaware soon found marks of feet on the soft ground, and they again followed the trail easily and rapidly. The Delaware was silent, and Eben, imitating his example scarcely uttered a word.

It was near nightfall when they reached, by way of a wooded slope, a valley, through which flowed a broad and beautiful river, none other than the fair Saskatchie, by whose banks La-la and her lover had walked. Here the trail seemed to grow "warmer," and Black Beaver counseled his friend to be still more silent and cautious. They proceeded more carefully and slowly, concealing themselves, as much as possible, from the view of any Blackfeet who might be straggling about, until the Delaware suddenly stopped, laid his hand on his companion's arm, and pointed to a number of horses that were grazing in the meadow, some distance beyond them.

"Injun camp mighty close," said he. "We go up through timber."

He examined his rifle, and loosened his knife in its belt, and the Yankee looked to the condition of his harpoon and its coil of light line, and then they moved silently up the slope. When they reached the edge of the prairie, they could plainly see the Indian village, which lay just before them. Smoke was curling up from some of the lodges, and men, women, and children were moving about among them. The two scouts made a circuit, gaining the rear of the village, and held a council of war in the shelter of some bushes, at the same time closely watching the scene beneath them. The Delaware said that they could do nothing until late in the night, when the Blackfeet would be asleep, and then they could only take advantage of any chances that might offer. In the mean time it was necessary to remain concealed, or to keep quiet.

This arrangement suited Eben very well, as even his headstrong valor quailed at the thought of encountering such a superior force, and, besides, he had had no sleep the previous night, and felt strongly inclined, as he said, to "turn in and caulk."

Black Beaver selected a retired and sheltered spot, in which,

as he supposed, the white man might rest securely, and left his companion to his slumbers; while he went to the edge of the slope to reconnoiter. He had not been there long when his attention was arrested by certain loud, prolonged and unpleasant noises. He was as much surprised as an Indian allows himself to be, for he knew of no beast or bird, in the forest or prairie, that could make such sounds. He soon perceived that they came from the thicket in which he had left Eben, and rightly concluded that the Yankee was snoring vigorously in his sleep. As he started back to awake him, fearing that the noise might bring an enemy upon them, he observed one of the Blackfeet crawling up the slope. It was evident that this man had also heard the snoring, for he seemed even more surprised than Black Beaver, and stopped, every now and then, in an attitude of listening.

The Delaware, seeing that there was no time to be lost, crept back to Eben's covert, swiftly and silently, and aroused the unconscious snorer as gently as he could, but not gently enough to prevent an exclamation.

"Avast there! Hello! is it time for the starboard watch?"

"'Sh-sh! Injuns close by. Be still, and look."

Eben looked, and started involuntarily, as he saw a tall Blackfoot crouching by the side of a tree, a short distance from them. The Indian appeared to be listening intently for the strange sounds that had now ceased. His face was partly turned from them, and his head leaned against the trunk of the tree.

"Why don't you shoot the whelp, Beaver?" eagerly whispered the Yankee.

"Don't want to shoot; make too big noise. You shoot that long arrow mighty well; s'pose you shoot it through his head."

"Darned if I don't! Stand by to haul him in!"

Eben arranged the coil of his line, grasped his harpoon firmly, rose up quietly, poised the long iron for a moment, and launched it at the watching foe. The keen barb crashed through the head of the Blackfoot, pinning him to the tree, and he died without even uttering a groan.

"Good shot—kill easy!" said the Delaware, as he crept to the tree, and disengaged the harpoon, at the same time securing the scalp of the fallen savage.

As he had had a sufficient experience of the Yankee's snoring abilities, he deemed it advisable not to allow him to fall asleep again, and, accordingly, took him on another reconnoitering tour. They posted themselves, this time, on a slight eminence at a greater distance from the camp, from which they soon saw a sight that astonished both of them. They saw Kotselo rush down upon the plain where the horses were grazing; saw him stab the chief, Nip-muck-we, and cover his body with bushes; and then saw him hasten to the village.

"What that mean?" exclaimed the Delaware, without attempting to conceal his surprise. "Black Beaver knows that Red Plume—seen him in fight. Who he kill?"

As this question could not be settled by either of them, they waited and watched, until Kotselo returned, accompanied by the Indian woman. He went to the knoll, from which he had made the descent upon Nip-muck-we, and unbound a man who was tied to a tree, whom neither the Delaware nor the Yankee had previously noticed. As the man rose to his feet, and they perceived that he was white, simultaneous exclamations broke from the lips of both.

"White man!" said the Delaware. "'Spect be Cap'n Frank."

"Darned if he ain't white!" chimed in Eben. "By jingo! I believe it is that good-lookin' upstart."

While they were irresolute, unable to determine what they had better do, young Steele hastened down the hill with his new friends, and the three mounted and rode rapidly away. It was then useless to attempt to pursue them, and the two scouts retraced their steps to the rear of the Indian village, in the hope that some opportunity might be offered them of discovering the whereabouts of Ellen Carver.

"Darn my buttons," exclaimed Eben, "if that don't take me right aback! That chap has run away, like a tarnation coward, and has left cousin Nelly, I s'pose, here among the Injuns. He put on airs as if he was all struck of a heap by her purty looks, but when it came to the trial, he sneaked away to save his own carcass. Have you any idee, Beaver, what in natur' it all means?"

"Black Beaver can't tell. 'Spect Red Plume mighty much mad, and kill somebody."

"Why did that white whelp go off with the Injun?"

"'Spect he know best."

As no satisfactory information could be got out of the Delaware, Eben, after lying in concealment for nearly an hour, watching the village in vain for some sign of Ellen, concluded that he would climb a tree, and thus gain a more extended view of the situation. Accordingly, leaving his harpoon on the ground, he went up a tall tree with true sailor-like agility, and soon reached a position from which he could see, not only the village, the plain and the river, but the vast extent of prairie that spread out on either side of the valley. As has been previously stated, the night was not dark, although no moon was shining.

The Yankee had not been long in the tree, when he observed an unusual commotion among the lodges. Men, women and children poured forth in a body, and streamed down on the plain, where they commenced to give utterance to the most doleful cries and lamentations. Presently the crowd returned, bearing on a litter something that was covered with a blanket, the yells and howls increasing as they approached the village. Eben made these facts known to his comrade, in his usual *viva voce* style.

"I say, Beaver, the Injuns are raisin' the Old Harry in partic'lar—bringin' that dead chap in from below, I calkilate."

"'Spect Red Plume killed a chief," answered the Delaware.
"But don't speak so loud. Somebody hear."

Eben heard this caution, but did not heed it, for he saw, at that moment, Ellen Carver, who had doubtless been overlooked during the excitement, walking in front of the lodge, and looking about. He immediately proclaimed his discovery with a stentorian shout, such as he might have uttered from the masthead of the brig *Dolphin*, on catching a glimpse of a distant whale.

"*There she blows!* Beaver, I see cousin Nelly!"

He was instantly heard and seen by the Blackfeet, a number of whom, with a yell of mingled rage and exultation, rushed up the slope. Eben Gookin hastily descended the tree, and picked up his harpoon, but, before he could use it, was overpowered and bound. The Delaware, perceiving that he could not aid his indiscreet comrade, sought his own safety in speedy flight.

CHAPTER VIII.

BIG MEDICINE ARROW.

EBEN GOOKIN, as may be supposed, was not a little astounded, when he found himself incontinently captured by the very red-men whom he had been endeavoring to avoid, and he bitterly regretted the incautious exclamation that had brought the calamity upon him. Bound, and surrounded by a crowd of painted, excited, wrathful savages, his condition was by no means an enviable one, and he was at first so completely bewildered, that he knew not what to say or do. His self-possession soon returned, however, and, with it, his Yankee mother wit, and he began to think how he might extricate himself from his unpleasant predicament. The Blackfeet thought, of course, that he must have had a companion, and eagerly questioned him, asking where the other had gone.

"None other," answered Eben, shaking his head, and gesticulating violently.

But some of the savages had seen the prints of the Delaware's moccasined feet, and hastened on his trail.

"None other with me," protested Eben, as he noticed this movement, and divined its cause. "Some Injuns been around here, but I don't know 'em."

Some of the Blackfeet had taken up the Yankee's harpoon, and were examining it, with its long coil of stout line, very curiously.

"What this?" asked one of them.

Eben Gookin had been long enough in the Indian country, and had sufficiently used his natural inquisitiveness, to be well acquainted with the habits and superstitions of the savages, and he resolved to avail himself of his knowledge, and impose on their credulity, which he might the more easily do, as it was by no means probable that any of them had ever seen a harpoon.

"Big medicine!" he exclaimed, in the most solemn tones

he could command, and gazing reverently at the weapon.
"Much big medicine!"

"What can it do?" he was asked.

Selecting one of the Indians who understood broken English passably well, Eben made him interpreter to the rest, and proceeded to explain the wonderful qualities of the "medicine," much after the fashion in which his countrymen of the present day advertise their "justly celebrated" cure-all. It would go where he wished it to go, and would do what he ordered it to do; it could draw the thunder down from the clouds, and could tell when it would rain and when it would shine; it could cure the sick; it could bring the dead to life; it could find lost trails and forgotten caches; it could do more strange and startling things than the Indians had ever heard or dreamed of.

As these statements were listened to by his captors with evident incredulity, Eben indignantly told them to loose his arms, and he would show them that he had spoken the truth. When this request was translated, a general assent was given, and he soon found himself free from all restraint, except that of the men who surrounded him.

After rubbing his wrists, to remove the numbness caused by the cords with which he had been bound, he drew the attention of the red-skins to a sapling that stood at the distance of nearly one hundred feet from him. Then he took the harpoon, poised it with great precision, and placed himself in such an attitude as would enable him to make the best possible use of his powers. After taking a very careful aim, he drew back his long and brawny arm, and sent forward the weapon with all the force of which he was capable. It struck the sapling, and hung there, quivering, for a moment, when it dropped to the ground.

The Indians uttered exclamations of wonder, and Eben himself was surprised at his performance, for the light was so uncertain, the distance so great, and the sapling so small, that he had hardly believed he would be able to accomplish the feat. Several of the Blackfeet took the instrument, and endeavored to imitate the Yankee, but none of them could cast it so far, or with the least accuracy. Eben explained to them, through the interpreter, that the "medicine" was utterly

useless in any hands but his own, and that they would have been severely hurt by it, if he had not given it strict orders to behave itself.

He then sat down, and picked up three small pebbles, which he laid in the palm of his left hand, while he held up the harpoon with his right hand, and repeated, gazing at the polished barb, some gibberish that sounded much like this: "By-jiminy-crackey — cat-in-the-corner-go — rorus-a-borus—onery-twoery-ickery-an—hocus-pocus-presto-change!"

He appeared to insert the pebbles in his left ear, after showing them to the savages, and explaining that he could make his side and leg hollow, so that they would go through to the ground. To prove this position, he stood up, shook himself for a while, and then gravely pulled off his boot, and shook the stones out of it. This performance was too much for the composure of the stolid Blackfeet, who eagerly picked up the pebbles, and turned them over in their hands, to make sure that they were the same that the white man had put in his ear. Having satisfied themselves on this point, they handled the harpoon again, looking at it with an expression of the greatest reverence.

Having prepared the minds of his auditors by these exploits, and inspired them with something like a proper respect for himself and his "medicine," Eben caused the interpreter to translate a speech for him, in which he assured the Indians that he had come among them alone, and for their own good, because he knew that the Blackfeet needed a big medicine. He professed himself able to cure their sick, to bring their dead to life, to make their squaws handsome, to find lost or stolen property, to give them success in all their undertakings, to teach them how to achieve certain victory over their enemies, and to do many other wonderful things, claiming nearly as much power as that which is so abundantly advertised by the back-room, fifty-cent astrologers and clairvoyants of civilization. Civilized humanity is easily humbugged by the latter class, and it was natural that the ignorant savages should be imposed upon by the performances and pretensions of a sharp Yankee.

His high-flown oration was hardly concluded, when the Indians who had been seeking for Black Beaver returned.

bringing with them the body of the warrior whom Eben had fatally harpooned. But they had seen nothing of the Delaware.

This discovery again excited the angry passions of the Blackfeet, who turned furiously upon the Yankee, and accused him of having slain their comrade. Eben stoutly denied the charge, saying that his mission was to cure, and not to kill, and assured them that he could soon inform them, by the aid of his wonderful "medicine," who had done the deed.

Permission being accorded to him, he solemnly laid his harpoon upon the corpse, knelt down, and repeated another mixture of gibberish, gazing intently at the point of the weapon, and making various outlandish gestures. Then he rose, and gave the interpreter an exact description of the Black Beaver.

"A Delaware! A sneaking dog of a Delaware! A thieving, lying, white-hearted Delaware!" exclaimed his captors, as he described the dress and paint of his late comrade.

"And another"—Eben gave them to understand. He then proceeded—there might have been some malice in his heart—to describe, as accurately as he could, the dress and appearance of Frank Steele. The savages instantly recognized their white prisoner, and a runner was dispatched, to ascertain whether he had made his escape. When the runner returned, and reported that Steele had cut the thongs with which he was tied, and was nowhere to be found, their confidence in the Yankee and his extraordinary "medicine" was greatly increased, and his stock rose rapidly in the Blackfeet market.

An elderly warrior, who acted as spokesman of the group, then suggested that, as the white man knew so much, and possessed such a wonderful talisman, he might be able to tell them who had murdered their chief, Nip-muck-we. Eben professed himself able to do so, provided he could see the body.

He was quickly led down to the village, being permitted to carry his magical weapon, which the Indians had dubbed the Big Medicine Arrow, and was placed by the side of the litter on which the body of the chief was lying. Removing the blanket, he laid his harpoon on the corpse, and went through

the same gibberish and gesticulations that he had used over the dead warrior in the wood. Then he rose to his feet, as before, and gave a rather misty description of Kotselo, the fugitive. It was sufficiently accurate, however, to enable his audience to understand that the deed had been done by the Red Plume, and the statement of the Yankee appeared quite probable, when they recollectcd with what ignominy Kotselo had been treated by the chief.

Search was made for the renegade, in his lodge and through the village, but he was not to be found, and the owner of the Big Medicine Arrow was earnestly besought to tell them what had become of him. This he readily did, saying that a handsome squaw had gone off with him, a squaw who wore a fine blanket, and had feathers in her long hair. The squaw was recognized as La-la, who was also reported as missing. Eben further informed them that they had taken horses from the plain, and had gone in a northerly direction. When it was known that the horses had disappeared, and when the plain trail of the fugitives was discovered, some of the most active young braves in the village, mounted on the fleetest animals, were sent in pursuit, although the Yankee, after consulting his harpoon, plainly told them that they could not hope to overtake the renegade, as he had more than two hours the start of them.

After these numerous and varied exhibitions of his magical powers, Eben was held in high estimation by his captors, and his Big Medicine Arrow was almost worshiped. Instead of being instantly slaughtered, and losing his precious scalp, he was elevated to an exalted position, and treated with all imaginable respect and honor. But there was another ordeal reserved for him, one from which he might well have shrunk, with fear and trembling, had not his native impudence, and the prestige that he had thus far gained, borne him out.

The elderly warrior, who had been acting as principal spokesman, threw out another suggestion, to the effect that the white man had professed himself able to bring the dead to life, and he would like to see him try his hand on Nip-muck-we.

"Certainly," answered Eben. "Nothing easier."

But he instantly regretted this hasty and incautious speech, when he reflected that such a performance was *rayther* beyond

his abilities. What he had already done appeared so wonderful in the eyes of the savages, and had excited so much eulogium, that he had almost begun to believe in his own omnipotence, and had spoken without thinking.

To hide his embarrassment, he bent down over the litter to take up his harpoon, and to think about what he should do in this emergency, when he noticed a strange appearance in the face of the supposed corpse. Gazing earnestly at the eyes, lips and nostrils of the chief, he detected a faint tremor of a nerve here, and a slight flutter of an eyelash there. Placing his hand over the region of the heart, and delicately feeling the pulse, he was sure that there was life in the Fat Bear, and resolved to try the experiment, "sink or swim, live or die, survive or perish!"

Replacing the blanket, and solemnly waving his magical harpoon, he ordered the body to be carried into a sheltered place. The litter was lifted, according to his directions, and borne within the chief's lodge. As Eben followed it, he perceived that the lodge was tenanted by two women, one of whom was old As-moo-tah, and the other was his fair cousin Ellen Carver!

The old hag was lying on the ground, having howled and moaned herself to sleep, but Ellen was wide awake, and recognized him as soon as he entered. She started up, and was about to speak to him, when he admonished her, by a waving motion of his harpoon, to leave him unnoticed. He then ordered the lodge to be cleared of all persons, except himself and the two women, which was quickly done, and he proceeded with his task.

Again uncovering the face and breast of the chief, he found the signs of life more apparent than he had previously noticed them. Taking a small flask of brandy from his pocket, placed it to the lips of the patient, and poured a little down his throat. After a struggle, Nip-muck-we breathed slightly, and blood began to trickle from the wounds in his breast and side. Eben gave him another sip, when the red man opened his eyes and lips, and groaned, while the blood flowed freely from his cuts. The Yankee let the blood run for a while, thinking that it would do the Fat Bear no hurt to lose it, and then stopped the flow from the wounds.

While this was being done, Ellen sat in silence, utterly lost in wonder, and the old hag, who had awoke from her slumber, was also silent, and no less astonished.

The wounds of the chief had been severe but not deep, and the sudden shock to his system, overburdened, as it was, with flesh, had produced a sort of paralysis, and left him in a state of coma. Eben had gained a smattering of medical knowledge in his youth, which had been roughly increased by his experience on shipboard, and he had no doubt that he would be able to save the life of Nip-muck-we, if his treatment was not interfered with. He bound up the wounds as well as the materials at hand would allow, and then invited a few of the principal men out of the crowd that was swarming about the lodge, to enter and view the miracle that had been wrought.

They did so, and the most stoical among them could not restrain their astonishment at seeing their dead chief alive, breathing and moving, though not yet able to speak. The Yankee was unanimously voted to be the greatest medicine-man that had ever come among the Blackfeet, and his wonderful harpoon was regarded with such mysterious awe that not a warrior dared to lay a finger on it.

CHAPTER IX.

THE BLACKFEET RENDEZVOUS.

AFTER having allowed the warriors to satisfy their curiosity, and to express their wonder and thanks, Eben turned them out of the lodge, informing them that the life of the distinguished patient depended on his being kept perfectly quiet. He ordered old As-moo-tah to procure some simple herbs, to make a tea that would quiet the nerves of the chief and give him strength to recover from his injuries. When the hag had gone, he found himself alone with Ellen, and improved his opportunity by rushing to her and kissing her hand vehemently, a familiarity which she did not feel herself justified, at that moment, in resenting.

As it was uncertain what amount of intelligence was possessed by the chief at that time, they withdrew to a part of the lodge in which they could not be observed by him, and conversed in low tones. Ellen was very anxious to hear the fate of the rest of the party, and was pleased to learn that her father, though badly wounded, was in a fair way to recover, and that her brother's hurt was but a slight one. She was at a loss to imagine how her tall cousin had come there, and how he had so strangely got into the good graces of the savages. Eben told his story as briefly as he could, making due allowance for exaggerations and for an amount of self-glorification that was worthy of an Indian brave relating his exploits. Ellen, as may be supposed, was both amused and astonished. She found the narrative sufficiently wonderful to cause her to give her cousin credit for more courage, ingenuity and impudence than she had supposed he possessed, and her estimate of him rose considerably, until he began to speak slightly of Frank Steele.

"Tell you what, Nelly," said he, "that young chap who commenced to be so sweet on you has turned out to be a reg'lar sneak."

"Who do you mean? What do you mean?"

"That young feller who came to our place after supper, who kept castin' sheep's eyes at you, my purty, and wanted us all to go to his father's camp, and then got us all picked up by these marnal Injuns. He ain't bad-lookin', I'll allow, but handsome is as handsome does, in my opinion, and the way he sneaked off and left you here, to be eat up alive, is no way for a gentleman to do, much less a man who puts on airs and calls himself brave."

"What do you mean, Eben? If you are speaking of Mr. Steele, I can inform you that he is a prisoner here, and is much worse off than I am, for I am told that he is to be put to death to-morrow."

"Not much he ain't, my sugar-sweet. There will be no puttin' to death for him, so long as he can scamper away and save his carcass. He is far from here now, for I saw an Injun cut him loose to-night, and then saw him steal a horse, and ride off with that same Injun and a red-skinned woman."

"Then he is safe, thank God! He has escaped, and he

will return with a force to rescue me, as he told me he would."

"Wa-al, cousin Nelly, if that's the way ye take it, I might as well have held my tongue. To my notion, it looked as if he was in too big a hurry to git away, to think much about you."

"He could do nothing to help me, unaided and alone, and they would have killed him to-morrow. He must know best what ought to be done."

"That's what Beaver said, but he is prejudiced, besides bein' an Injun; and it's what you say, but I calkilate you've a hankerin' arter that young feller's black hair and eyes. You see that I didn't run away from you, Nelly, though I don't purtend to be quite as good-lookin' as he is, but I came right into the den of lions, to do what I can for you."

"I thought you were captured and brought here," naively answered Ellen.

"So I was, a sorter, but you see I wanted to come, and fixed it up that way, and you know how I've pulled the wool over the eyes of these red-skinned critters. Jist you rest easy, cousin Nelly, and trust to home folks, like your own Eben, and you will soon see how I will play the game and git you safe out of this scrape."

The conversation was here interrupted by the entrance of As-inoo-tah, who glared at Eben as if she thought he was getting entirely too familiar with the fair captive; but the medicine-man exercised his authority as only a physician of acknowledged standing can do, ordering her about as he chose, until the tea was duly prepared and administered to the chief. Nip-muck-we soon sunk into a comfortable slumber, and Eben, after directing the hag to give him more of the draugh when he should wake, and bidding Ellen good-night, took his cherished harpoon, and walked majestically out of the lodge.

He found a crowd o' men, women and children waiting to receive and honor him, to whom he reported the favorable condition of his patient. Among them were the relatives of the warrior who had fallen by his hand. These forlorn wretches beset him with a doleful clamor, and besought him to raise the slaughtered brave from the dead.

The Yankee knew that it would be impossible to comply with this request, as the man's skull was thoroughly shattered, and his brains, if any he had, must have completely left it, and he was somewhat puzzled to tell what to do. But his impudence again came to his aid, and he gravely assured the anxious relatives that it was beneath his dignity, and contrary to his practice, to exercise that portion of his sublime art upon any person of less consequence than a chief, and that, even if he could so far lower his professional standard, his big medicine arrow would not consent to aid him in the work. They were obliged to be content with this answer, as the great magician was inexorable, and he was soon provided with supper, and put to sleep, with his harpoon, on a comfortable couch.

During the next day, Eben Gookin was the acknowledged lion of the village. To be sure, he was unfavorably regarded by an old woman, who, during many years, had been the established practitioner; but he easily disarmed her resentment by refusing to interfere with her treatment in any cases, and by actually asking her advice concerning the chief, and employing her to prepare for him certain soothing draughts and mild dressings for his wounds. An eminent city physician could not more effectually have flattered the vanity of a village apothecary, by inviting him to a consultation, than Eben smoothed the ruffled feathers of that ancient mistress of roots and herbs.

As for himself, his position was unquestionable; the wonderful manner in which he had restored Nip-muck-we to life had made him *facile princeps*, monarch of all he surveyed, in the "big medicine" and magical line of business. He had no difficulty in refusing such cases as he thought beyond his skill, or in objecting to any thing that might give him trouble, for he could always consult his famous harpoon, and that invariably told him to do just as he pleased, and no one dared to question its decrees.

Still, with all his popularity, he was making no progress with his great object, the release of Ellen and himself from the clutches of the Blackfeet. That, however, it was necessary to leave to time and opportunity, and he congratulated himself, in the mean time, that he had his cousin to himself, and that

his fancied rights could not be invaded by any good-looking young man with black hair and eyes. He felt that he could only wait and watch his chances, hoping that the Fat Bear would not take it into his head to die in earnest, as he seriously doubted his ability to resuscitate him a second time.

During the day, several large parties of Blackfeet came from different directions and joined the band, until nearly three hundred lodges were congregated in the valley. They were concentrating their forces for the purpose of combined attacks upon trading or trapping parties and such Indians as were friendly to the whites, and the scene was a lively and martial one, after the red-skin fashion.

The new-comers were soon made acquainted with Eben and with the wonderful things he had performed by the aid of his big medicine arrow, which he always carried about with him, as if it was a talisman. Their praise, wonder and curiosity were very flattering to the Yankee, but were also a source of considerable embarrassment, as he was prevented from enjoying the society of his cousin, and as he was continually fearful that some great man among them might die suddenly, and he might be called upon to rescue him from the grave. Every arrival of a chief counted one chance against him, and he began to wish that he was well out of the scrape.

In the evening all the men gave themselves up to a grand dance and carousal. After the dance, they made amends for their usual taciturnity, by talking as loud and long as any stump-orator when election day is near, with this exception, that the politician brags of his party, and abuses the opposite political nuisance, while the chivalrous Blackfeet boasted immensely of their own deeds, past and to come, and denounced all their antagonists as dogs, squaws and old women, whom it was always perfectly easy to whip, when they could find the cowardly wretches.

When they had finished their boasting, they betook themselves to gambling, in which they were fully as enthusiastic as in their oratorical displays. Some seated themselves on the grass in groups, and played with dice and small stones, more eagerly and excitedly than civilized gamesters, a warrior frequently losing all he possessed in the world, on the turn of a die. But the greater number engaged in the favorite game

of "Hand." Two large parties were drawn up, on each side of a blazing fire, one of which was called the party "in hand," and the other the party "out of hand." A small piece of wood was rapidly passed from one to another of the party in hand, the other side striving to guess, as it was hurried from one to another, where it was concealed. This was accompanied by a wild chant, and by beating with sticks upon dry poles. Simple as the game may seem, it was wonderfully exciting, as played by a number of Indians. Commencing slowly at first, it soon waxed fast and furious, the chant rising and growing more rapid, and the din of the drumming increasing, until it was almost deafening. The players became greatly excited, the perspiration streamed off from their bodies, bets were wildly shouted from one side to the other, and it seemed, for a while, as if Pandemonium had broken loose.

The old men walked among the groups, nearly as much excited as the gamblers themselves, and could not refrain from guessing, now and then, at the place of concealment of the *cache*, or betting on the spotted dice.

Among these oldsters, the recipient of their profuse attentions, was Eben Gookin, with his magical harpoon. He was as solemn as any owl, as grave as any judge, but he was troubled, for he feared that these exciting exercises would lead to a fight, which might result in the death of some chief. As rapidly as his assumed dignity would allow, he edged away from the crowd, toward the lodge that his cousin Ellen occupied. As he did so, he noticed that he was followed by an Indian, closely wrapped in a blanket, who had been watching the players. Eben did not think there was any thing strange in this, until the man touched him on the shoulder. As he turned around, the blanket was drawn aside, and he recognized the familiar features of Black Beaver. The Delaware was one of the last men the Yankee would have expected to meet at that time and place, but he was careful to conceal his surprise, and merely stared.

"Eben mighty smart man," said Black Beaver; "fool Injuns, mighty much—but can't be medicine-man always."

"That's a fact, Beaver, and I'm thinkin' how to sneak out of this scrape, and git the gal off."

"Can't Eben bring gal out to-morrer night, out where he

killed the Injun? Black Beaver knows good place to hide."

"P'raps I can. I'll try it, anyhow. If I can git that old squaw out of the way, I will fix her up Injun-fashion."

"Good! Bring gal out. Black Beaver will wait, and make all safe."

So saying, the Delaware drew his blanket more closely about him, and glided away.

Eben went to the chief's lodge, where he found Nip-muck we improving, and gave directions for his further treatment. He could only get a chance to whisper a few words to Ellen, as she was closely watched by As-moo-tah, and he soon went to his own couch, intending to arrange his means of escape the next day.

The plan was frustrated, however, by an unexpected change of camp. Early in the morning, the lodges were taken down, and all the large assemblage of Blackfeet, men, women, children, horses and dogs, together with Ellen Carver and Eben Gookin and his harpoon, were on their way to another location.

CHAPTER X

ON THE TRAIL.

THERE was much excitement in Captain Steele's camp when Bill Bush returned, bringing with him Frank, Red Plume and La-la. The trader was overjoyed to meet his son, whom he had hardly expected to see again, notwithstanding the assurances of Bush. The Carvers were very anxious to learn the fate of Ellen, but young Steele could give them little information, beyond the fact that she was a prisoner, and, as far as he could know, was unharmed. Red Plume had not seen her, and La-la had been too much occupied with her own sorrow, to think of the captive white maiden.

A great deal of sympathy was manifested for the Carvers, and it was resolved that no time must be lost in attempting to rescue Ellen from the Indians. Frank desired to organize

a party immediately, and effect her release by force of arms, and in this he was supported by his father, who gave him liberty to select as many men from his command as were willing to aid him in his enterprise. But Bill Bush protested against the plan, as likely to cause considerable loss of life, without gaining its object.

"From what I know of these yere Blackfeet," said he, 'they won't be apt to hurt the gal, unless she turns out to be oo cantankerous. They ain't like the reg'lar perairas Injuns, who never show a woman crittur the least bit of mercy: but they like to keep the white women when they git 'em, 'specially ef they're purty, hopin' to make squaws of 'em, or to turn 'em into money in some way. Ef we should go to work and fight 'em, either they would whip us, or we would whip them. Ef we got whipped they would hold onto the gal, of course, and ef they got whipped, it is ten to one they would kill the gal, when they saw they were bound to lose her. So you see, 'cordin' to my notion, it will be best for two or three of us to go—not enough to be in each other's way—and try to outsmart the Injuns."

Bush was upheld in his opinion by some of the trappers, who also stated their belief that the bands of Blackfeet that had been prowling about in that region were uniting, for the purpose of a grand campaign against the traders and trappers, and that the entire force of the whites would not be sufficient to make a successful attack upon them, on ground of their own choosing.

"You see, now, Cap'n Frank," continued Bush, "that thar's no use in takin' a crowd with us. You and I will go, my boy, and we will take good hosses and plenty of provender, and will camp around the villains until we git what we want. I can't think what's 'come of the Delaware and the Yankee, who went to hunt the trail, unless they've been rubbed out by the Blackfeet, or are hangin' round on that trail yit. Howsomever, we know whar' to go, and needn't bother 'bout anythin' else."

David Carver, although his wounded arm was still painful, declared his intention of aiding in the rescue of his sister, and the renegade Blackfoot also expressed a desire to be one of the party. Bush was glad to accept the services of Red

Plume, but consented rather ungraciously to the proposal of young Carver, as he considered him a "greeny," and likely to be in the way.

Kotselo left his stolen bride with his adopted tribe, and the four men, well mounted, armed and provisioned, set out on their errand of deliverance.

In due course of time, they reached the valley of the Saskatchie, and the place where Frank Steele had been so providentially saved from the hands of the savages. The renegade, as the person best acquainted with the locality, was sent forward to reconnoiter, and soon returned with the intelligence that the camp was deserted.

After Kotselo had made a further examination of the locality, in order to make sure that no lurking Indians had been left behind, the party rode down on the plain, and examined the site of the late village. Long experience rendered them able to determine, with great exactness, the number of the Blackfeet warriors, and the hour at which they had left the valley.

"The boys war' right," said Bill Bush, after a full inspection of the surroundings. "The infarnal Blackfeet are bound to kick up a row with somebody, and they've got a big lot of fightin' men together, fur sart'in. We would be running our head ag'in a rock, to try to pitch into 'em jest now, and I reckon it will be jest as much as we ken all do to keep 'em off, ef they take a notion to pitch into us."

"Where do you suppose the Indians have gone to?" asked David Carver, "and what do you mean to do now?"

"This hoss can't purtend to say whar' they've put out for, but he ken find out mighty easy, by follerin' the trail, and that is jest what we allow to do. Better stop and eat a little suthin', boys, as I reckon we've got plenty of time to ketch up with the critturs."

All were ready to comply with this suggestion, and the pursuers satisfied their hunger, after which they took up the trail, and followed it to the river, which was then fordable and easy to cross. The sharp eyes of Bill Bush, who was the first to reach the other side, discovered a corked bottle floating in a little eddy near the bank. He picked it up, and showed it to his companions, when all had safely made the crossing.

"I know that bottle," said young Carver, as he examined the article. "It is cousin Eben's pocket-flask, that he carried his spirits in. Shouldn't wonder if he has put it there on purpose, to give a hint to such as might come after. Yes, there's a paper in it, too. Come and take a look at this, Mr. Steele."

David extricated the paper from the flask, and read as follows:

"All right. Nelly is safe so far. So am I, but in a ticklish fix. Don't know where we are going. Lots of Injuns with us. Tell that young Steele that he needn't think any more about Nelly, as she knows who sticks to her in time of trouble.

"E. G."

"That is good news, anyhow," he said, when he had finished. "I am glad to hear that they are safe, especially sister Nelly. I never feel troubled about Eben, as he seems to get out of scrapes as easy as he gets into them, and that is saying considerable."

"Judging from the tone of his note," said Steele, "I think he has impudence enough to carry him through anything. Come, now, let us follow up this trail while it is warm."

The trail was easily followed, for there was a small army of the Indians, including their women and children and other live stock, and they had left a track that even David Carver would have called as plain as a wagon-road. Consequently, our friends traveled at their leisure, wishing to keep well in the rear of the Blackfeet, as it was far from their desire to provoke an encounter, or to be discovered.

It was late in the night when they reached a high bluff, which overlooked a broad and beautiful valley, through which, as through the valley of the Saskatchie, ran a stream of water. Here Bush ordered a halt, and crept forward to the edge of the bluff, and looked down into the valley from a position at which he could see without being seen. He soon discovered that the Blackfeet camp, as he had supposed would be the case, was located there. He called his companions, and showed them the wreaths of smoke that curled up, here and there, above the tops of the trees. The practiced eyes of the trapper and the Indian told them that a large force was camped in the valley.

"Thar's the hull blasted lot of 'em, I reckon, Cap'n Frank," said the trapper. "The night is too dark, and the timber too thick, fur countin' the lodges, but I make no doubt that the hull crowd that was camped up yonder, is now lyin' hereabouts."

"But what are they there for, Bill? They had a better camping ground, and plenty of wood and grass where they were."

"That's a fact, and you may be sure they hevn't come here fur nothin'? They mean business, Cap'n Frank, and business with them means fight; that's what's the trouble with the Blackfeet jest now. It sorter strikes me, too, that they ain't more'n a thousand miles from our camp. What say you, Red Plume?"

"Maybe so not many mile," answered the Indian. "Not many miles from Nepercry camp, too. If they want Kotselo, they shall find him in the fight."

"Why, you don't allow, you foolish red-skin, that they are sech durned fools as to make all this trouble, and git into a big row, jest because of you and that good-lookin' squaw?"

"Maybe so yes; the Fat Bear was a chief, and La-la was the wife of a chief and the daughter of a big warrior."

"Wal, thar's no use in palaverin'. Talk is easy, but it never took any sculps. S'pose you two lie low, and take keer of the hosses, while Red Plume and I sneak down below, and find out what we ken."

A place of rendezvous was selected, and the trapper and the Indian moved cautiously and silently down the declivity, availing themselves of every convenient cover, although it was hardly possible that they could be observed from the village. When they reached the plain, which was heavily timbered, and afforded good opportunity for concealment, they agreed to divide, one passing to the right, and the other to the left of the encampment, and to meet, on their return from their respective scouts, at the point where they separated.

Bush went to the right, moving almost as silently as a snake in the grass, now walking boldly in the shelter of a thicket, and then crawling and squirming over the slight inequalities of the ground, where there was little or no cover. Sometimes he was enabled to edge quite close to the lodges, and at

others was obliged to make a considerable *détour*, to escape observation. His principal object was, to determine the exact location of the camp, and to calculate, as nearly as possible, the number of warriors it contained.

All was quiet in the village, and there were no signs of life, except that, here and there, an Indian stood or walked among the lodges, as if standing sentry over his sleeping companions. Here and there remnants of fires were smoldering, and here and there, also, the trapper perceived the shield, head-dress and insignia of a chief, displayed on a pole in front of his lodge. A few horses were secured within a small inclosure, and a large number were grazing in an open portion of the plain. It was evident that the Blackfeet considered themselves in such large force, or in such a secure position, that no attack was to be feared, and the trapper could not help concluding that they were right in their belief, for there was no party of their foes in that region with which he would have ventured to assail them.

Having completed his investigations in this quarter, Bush made a circuit around the drove of horses, in order to reach the stream, and survey the situation from that side. Keeping close to the bank of the little river, he worked his way through the thick growth of cottonwoods and willows, until he was again nearly opposite the encampment. First looking carefully around, to make sure that he was not observed, he was about to move toward the lodges, when his attention was arrested by an Indian, who was moving slowly down the stream, close under the edge of the bank, with his head and shoulders above the water, and a rifle in his hand.

The first thought of the trapper was, that Red Plume had also made the circuit of the village, with the same purpose as himself; but he reflected that the renegade had no rifle, and concluded that it must be a prowling Blackfoot. It was necessary, therefore, that he should be concealed until the Indian passed, and he availed himself of the shelter of a bush, from which he could observe the movements of his supposed foe.

His surprise was considerable, and the unpleasant nature of his situation was apparent, when he saw the Indian stop opposite where he lay, place his rifle on the shore, and raise his head and shoulders above the bank. From his paint and the

style of his hair, it was at once evident that he was not a Blackfoot, and there was something about his features that seemed familiar to the trapper. As the Indian turned his face, so that his profile came in view, Bush was certain that he knew him, and uttered a low hiss to attract his attention. The Indian quickly turned, and looked anxiously around.

"Beaver!" whispered the trapper.

The Delaware—for it was he—laid his hand on his rifle.

"Don't be skeered, Beaver, for it's only me. Bill Bush."

As Bush spoke, he raised his head above his shelter, and Black Beaver, without the least visible emotion of surprise or excitement, crawled up on the bank and came to him.

Few words were spoken between them, and they quietly passed over the route by which the trapper had come, until they reached the place at which he was to meet Kotselo.

CHAPTER XI

A COPPER-COLORED GHOST.

"WHAR'S that Yankee who went off with ye, Beaver?" asked the trapper, when they had reached the appointed spot, and were beyond the hearing and observation of those in the village.

"Eben's mighty big medicine 'mong Blackfeet, now," answered the Delaware, with a chuckle.

"What do you mean?"

"He walk 'round the lodges, with his long arrow and lariat and all Blackfeet rub their noses, and open their eyes wide."

"Wal, that beats Bill Hutchins and the b'ar! The biggest wonder is that he's alive. He must hev' been playin' on the Blackfeet some of those infarnal Yankee tricks that I've heard of. Do you know how he got such a holt onto 'em?"

"Don't know, but he's mighty big medicine. Heard one Blackfoot say that chief was killed dead, mighty dead, and Eben make him alive, right away."

"Those Yankees beat the nation fur tricks, and no mistake!"

I wonder why thar' don't more of 'em git arter the beaver? 'Spect they'd find suthin' then to try thar' cunnin'. I rather reckon, Delaware, that the chief wasn't very dead. Ef he should die on the Yankee's hands, now, thar'd be one white man sculped in a hurry, and wuss'n that. It's likely to happen, anyhow, unless we kin git him out. Why don't he make tracks, ef he is so smart?"

"Ugh! Blackfeet don't want to lose such big medicine and watch him mighty close. Nice white gal thar', too."

"That's a fact. I wonder, now, whar' that Injun of mine is? I wish the rip would come along, for the boys will be thinkin' we've got into a scrape. It can't be possible that he has gone back to his tribe, or he would have had them about our ears afore this."

The trapper spoke musingly, and looked in the direction from which he expected the renegade to come. As he did so, he saw Red Plume running toward them, his long feather streaming back on the night breeze, his face almost pale, and his countenance expressive of the greatest terror. Bush was surprised, and showed that he was, but he was confident that the Indian was not pursued, for he would not, if a legion of enemies were at his back, have exhibited such symptoms of fear, and have fled in such a headlong manner. He waited, therefore, calmly, until Red Plume came up, nearly exhausted by his labor and excitement.

"Wal, here's a crazy Injun! What in natur' is the matter with you?"

"Kotselo has seen a spirit!" answered the renegade, as soon as he could recover his breath sufficiently to speak.

The trapper and the Delaware started, for both were superstitious, and not only believed that the spirits of the dead sometimes revisited the earth, but were sure that they themselves had been witnesses of such visitations. Bush, however, affected to laugh at the astounding declaration, and ordered the renegade to explain himself, which he did in the Blackfeet tongue, as his English was not equal to such a task.

"Kotselo went to the village," said he. "I crept like a snake, so that none could see or hear me, but my eyes and ears were open. All was quiet, and I went where I chose, until a dog came and barked at me. But I knew the dog, and spoke

to him, and he barked no more. I counted the lodges, as many as I could, and saw what chiefs were there. Some warriors were talking, and I listened, and heard them speak of a great war-party. I left the village, and went to the river-side, among the bushes. Then I came back to meet you, and tell you what I had seen and heard. I was just beyond the lodges, and was walking fast, when there suddenly rose out of the ground a great, tall form, all covered with a scarlet blanket. I raised my knife, for I thought I had met a Blackfoot warrior, when the blanket fell off, and I saw before me the spirit of the man I slew—I saw Nip-muck-we!"

Here the renegade shuddered, and covered his eyes with his hands, as if the fearful object was again before him, and the trapper and the Delaware looked at each other, as if they were more than half ready to share his terror.

"I shut my eyes for a moment," continued Red Plume, "because I was so afraid, for I had never seen a spirit before, and this was the spirit of the man I had killed. It makes me afraid now when I think of his eyes, that were like balls of fire, and the hand that pointed at me, that shone like the fire we see in rotten wood. I opened my eyes, but he was gone—he had sunk into the ground again. I looked no more, but ran, and hardly knew what I did, until I met you here."

It must be confessed that Bush and the Delaware did not entirely disbelieve this tale of the supernatural; in fact, they were strongly inclined to credit it. Their opinions on that point, though not then expressed to each other, were quite similar. They did not doubt the current report among the Blackfeet, that the Fat Bear had been raised to life by Eben Gookin; but they thought it highly probable that the Indians, by some "Yankee trick," had been imposed upon. If Eben had really cured him, it was not likely that the chief would have been out at night, beyond the lodges, and would have appeared and disappeared in such a mysterious manner. The great terror of Red Plume, and their own supernatural impulses, persuaded them that the chief either had not been resuscitated, or had afterward died "again;" and what was more probable than that his spirit should visit his murderer?

This view of the case, however, was not the proper one to present to the renegade, whose services were necessary to

them in their undertaking, and they strove to cheer him up, and to ridicule his vision.

"Maybe so chief not so much dead," said Black Beaver.

"That's so," chimed in the trapper. "We know, fur sart'in, Red Plume, that the Blackfeet say the old wretch is livin' yet, and likely to live. You didn't quite kill him, you see, and ther' comes a big medicine-man among the Blackfeet, who cured him up, and made him quite lively again."

This explanation afforded the renegade a little consolation, but it did not materially help the case, as he was still disposed to regard the vision in the same light as before, especially, as it was plain to him that neither the Delaware nor the trapper argued the point very earnestly.

"Kotselo has seen the spirit of Nip-muck-we, and he must die," he said, as he sadly accompanied Bush and Beaver to the rendezvous at which they had left their horses and their friends.

Steele and Carver greeted Black Beaver, and eagerly inquired what they had seen and heard. As the adventure of Red Plume was the most exciting news, that was first related, and it provoked a variety of comment. The two young men laughed at the idea of ghosts, and maintained that the renegade had been laboring under an optical delusion, or had really seen the Fat Bear alive and in the flesh. But the young Blackfoot was not to be convinced, the Delaware was silent, and the trapper solemnly shook his head.

"Thar's no use in tellin' this hoss, Cap'n Frank," said he, "that thar's no ghosts. You are better larnt man than ole Bill Bush, both of ye, fur all the l'arnin' I've got hes been picked up out yere in the wilderness; but what I've seen and heerd, that I've seen and heerd, and that I ken swar' to. Thar' was an old pardner of mine, one Bill Hutchins, the same as had the three-cornered fight with the b'ar, what you've heern me tell of. Hutch and I had trapped and hunted together in these parts, goin' on ten year, and ef that don't make friends of two folks, thar's nothin' will. We fought sometimes, of course, but I ken say fur Hutch that he never hit me once arter I'd hollered, and sich a friend as that is wuth havin'.

"Wal, Hutch and I war' trappin', one season, 'way up above the head fork of the Salmon, in the mountings, whar'

I reckon, no white man or Injun hed ever been afore. One mornin' Hutch left camp, and went up to look at the traps, and he come back missin'—that is, he never come back ag'in. Day in and day out, fur more'n a week, I hunted through every hill and gully, every hole and corner in all that reach, but no sign could I see of Hutch. I 'lowed, of course, that he'd been killed; but, what had become of his body was too high a honeycomb fur this b'ar to climb to. S., I loaded up the skins and traps, and went back to the settl - ment, but I could never quit thinkin' 'bout Hutch.

"Next summer, I was layin' off at Laramie, and was snoozin' right sound one night, when I woke up, and saw Hutch standin' by my blanket. It kinder started me, I admit, but he looked mighty nateral, and I spoke to him.

"' Hallo, Hutch !' says I, ' whar' in creation did you come from ?'

"' No matter whar' I come from,' says he. ' It's lucky for you, old hoss, that I'm dead, or I'd wallop you for not findin' me and buryin' me.'

"' I did my best, Hutch,' says I; ' I hunted all over crea - on, but couldn't find a sign of ye.'

"' Then,' says he, ' you must be one of the durndest fools utside the settlements, fur I was right under the Devil's Table. And I'm thar' yit, and I want to be buried.'

"He made me promise to find him and bury him, and was off like a flash.

"Next mornin', as soon as I could git my outfit together, I was off for the Salmon. It was a long journey, but I got thar' at last, and p'inted right fur the Devil's Table, and then I wondered I hadn't hunted thar' afore. It was a flat rock, that we hed giv' that name to, reachin' out over a narrow cañon, some sixty feet deep. I hed mighty hard work to git down into it, but thar' I was at last, and thar' I found, jist as his ghost hed told me, Hutch's bones and part of his clothes. I buried them, and hev' wondered ever sence, how he could hev' been sech a durned fool as to fall down into that cañon. Now, Cap'n Frank," continued the narrator, with an air of triumph, "what do you think of that? P'raps ye don't believe me."

"I believe," answered Steele, "that you were thinking

about the loss of your partner, and wondering what had become of him, until you dreamed about him, and the remembrance of the only spot you had not searched came to you in your dream."

"Wal, I declar' that's too pi'son bad! I thought ye hed more sense, Cap'n Frank. Why, it's plain as a wagon-trail that Hutch's ghost told me about it."

"So be it; I am glad he is at rest now. I want to hear what you learned about the Blackfeet and our friends."

Black Beaver could only say that Eben Gookin, in his capacity of big medicine, was still there, and that Ellen Carver was still there, but that he had had no further opportunity of communicating with them. Bush gave an estimate of the strength of the camp, and the renegade reported a conversation that he had heard between some warriors, the purport of which was, that a strong war-party, to be led by the principal chief, was shortly to set out, and that a sufficient guard would be left with the women and children at the camp.

This information was considered of sufficient importance to demand immediate action, as there were no bodies of men in the neighborhood against which a war-party would be likely to be sent, except Captain Frank Steele and his friends. It was agreed that a messenger should be immediately dispatched to the camp, to put them on their guard against attack, and the renegade was selected for that duty. He was willing to go, as he was quite depressed in spirits, and was anxious to leave the scene of his late adventure. He was a brave man, and never flinched from fighting fleshly foes, but a ghostly antagonist was, to use a popular phrase, "too much for him."

The others determined to remain, for the purpose of watching the Blackfeet camp, and taking advantage of any opportunity that might be offered.

CHAPTER XII

TRIBULATIONS OF EBEN.

EBEN GOOKIN did not find his situation at all improved by the removal of the Blackfeet to their new camp. In the first place, he was obliged to perform the journey on horseback.

which was very detrimental to his dignity, and greatly interfered with his management of the Big Medicine Arrow. Indeed, he was often fearful of losing that invaluable talisman, and only preserved it at the cost of considerable bodily terror and discomfort. He would far rather have walked, but the old warrior, who had compelled him to effect the cure of Nip-muck-we, was ready to show his enmity on this, as on other occasions, and insisted that it was entirely out of the question for so distinguished a physician to walk like squaws or other common people, and that he must really furnish the bearer of the Big Medicine Arrow with a horse. He brought a horse, accordingly, and such a horse! —a tall, gaunt, hard-bitted, vicious, sharp-backed, angular, hard-trotting beast, fit for neither men nor monkeys to ride. Poor Eben looked at this architectural animal with a rueful countenance, for he dreaded a shipwreck in the wilderness more than he ever had in the wildest night on a lee shore. But there was no help for it, and he accepted the "favor" in pretty muich the same spirit in which it was offered.

In the second place, he was troubled about Nip-muck-we. That adipose chieftain was in no condition to be moved, and any consulting physician would have pronounced such a course to be little short of murder—Nevertheless, the Blackfeet had unlimited confidence in the abilities of their Big Medicine, and probably thought that it was of no consequence if the Fat Bear should die a few times more, as he could be so easily returned to the world. Therefore the chief must go and, although Eben caused him to be placed in a litter and carried as carefully as possible, he was continually in fear lest the journey would destroy the old fellow's remanant of vitality, and the Blackfeet would call on the medicine-man for another experiment.

"Darn my buttons!" he thought, "they sart'inaly can't expect a feller to bring the same man to life *twice!* But I'll bet my harpoon against a tin sixpence, that they jist would. Confound their ugly pictur's! if they do run afoul my hawser, I'll send the old shooter through one on 'em, I kr dw!"

Eben was agreeably disappointed, for, in spite of his fears and prognostications, he reached his journeys' end in safety, together with his patient, and was relieved, at last, from the torture of his hard-trotting steed. It is true that the

experience of the day had left him with aching bones and smarting flesh, but he bore these afflictions bravely, and they only served to increase the rigid solemnity of his countenance.

More trouble awaited him. After he had safely deposited Nip-muck-we on his couch in his lodge, and had attended to his wounds, he left him in the care of the old medicin woman, and went to seek his fair cousin. He soon discovered that she had been placed in a lodge by herself, and was closely guarded. He learned that this had been done by the order of old As-moo-tah, who was reserving the white maiden until she could be taken as a bride by her brother, the Fat Bear. He felt that his request would not be granted, if he should ask permission to see her, and was sure that it would be very impolitic to make such an application. Consequently, he contented himself with inward anathemas.

"Confound the pesky critturs!" he thought. "Darned if I don't believe they will beat me yet. I'm gittin' doubtful whether all Massachusetts could swindle 'em much. If I thought there was any fear that cousin Nelty would ever be the squaw of that ugly old chief, he wouldn't live an hour, if they burnt me for it afore morning!"

Trouble on trouble's head accumulates. It never rains but it pours. Eben Gookin soon had cause enough to believe that serious poet, who said :

"Oh, what a tangled web we weave,
When first we practice to deceive!"

The old warrior who had so kindly favored him with his blistering barb, and whose mellifluous name was Ash-ne-cow-me-no-qua, again approached him, and desired his medical services. The fact is, that the crusty and spiteful old fellow with the hard name thought he knew a thing or two, and shrewdly suspected that the Yankee was a humbug. He was, also, determined to test the truth of his suspicions.

He stated, through the interpreter, that he had heard the medicine-man say that the Big Arrow could make the women of the Blackfeet beautiful, and desired to be informed whether he had heard aright, or whether a little bird had whispered it to him.

"I calkilate there won't never be no hummin' birds peckin' about your ears, you cantankerous old scamp!" commenced

Eben; but he cooled down, as he saw the necessity of controlling his wrath, and gravely informed the inquirer that the Big Arrow could do that very thing.

He was then told that As-moo-tah, the sister of the Fat Bear, whom the medicine-man had so wonderfully brought to life, was a widow, and could get no husband, because she was old and ugly. It was desired that the power of the Big Medicine Arrow should be tried upon her, in order that she might become handsome, and have favor in the eyes of the warriors. Would the white man do her that kindness?

Of course he would; and he was politely requested to perform the contract as soon as possible.

Eben Gookin felt that he was in a scrape. To effect a temporary purpose—the preservation of his valuable life—he had boasted of the virtues of his weapon more extensively than he would have done, under less exciting circumstances. He now had an absolute impossibility presented to him, for it was certain that nothing short of the fabled fountain of eternal youth could add a particle of beauty or grace to the wrinkled cheeks and decrepit form of that horrid old hag. Still, the resolute Yankee did not despair; he thought, and "calculated."

"Darn my buttons if I don't do it!" he muttered at length. "If it comes to the wust, I can remove her to another sp'ere, to brightly bloom in beauty there. Jehosaphat! what would elder Shepley say to that pome! If I can't make her purty in this world, I can send her to the next, and, as the Injuns are all Universalists, she'll be sure to be a blessed angel."

Having come to this conclusion, Eben went to his lodge, and "coiled up" by the side of his beloved harpoon.

But it seemed as if fate had selected our Yankee friend for its special football that night, as if his troubles were destined to have no termination but a bloody one. His most serious difficulty was to come, and it happened in this wise:

Old Nip-muck-we, notwithstanding the care of Eben and his attendants, had been seriously shaken up during his journey, and, as night set in, a burning fever set into his body and brain. It increased, it raged, it became delirium. The old medicine-woman, in whose charge he had been left, had imbibed one of her own sedative draughts, and slept soundly

on a buffalo-skin. The chief was restless and perturbed ; his fever gave him temporary strength ; he rose from his couch, threw a red blanket over his fat form, and sallied out of the lodge, without waking the old woman. He walked forth, unnoticed and unnoticing, not knowing where he went, beyond the village, into the wooded plain.

He had not gone far before he missed his uncertain footing, and fell feebly into a small gully. He must have lain there a long time, but he regained his disordered senses at last, and succeeded in crawling out of the gully and standing upright. As he did so, the form of a warrior passed before him. He threw aside his blanket to look at it, and instantly recognized, or thought he did, the hated and dreaded features of his rival and would-be-murderer, Kotselo, the Red Plume ! The sight was too much for the weak mind and body of the wounded chief. He imagined nothing else than that he was to be assassinated, and that sure work was to be made of it this time. Full of fear and horror, he threw up his hands, one of which was shining with phosphorus from some decayed wood by which he had lain, and, with a groan, dropped back into the ditch.

The old medicine-woman awoke after a while, missed her patient, and raised a howl that speedily aroused the village. Men and women came flocking to the lodge, and speedily learned, to their surprise and terror, that the chief was missing. Search was made on all sides, and it was not long before Nip-muck-we was discovered, speechless and nearly dead, in the gully where he had fallen. The poor wretch was carried to his lodge, and laid on his couch again, and the white medicine-man was immediately summoned to account for the calamity that had befallen his patient.

Eben could only do so by telling the truth, and saying that he had left the old woman in charge of the chief, that she had probably gone to sleep, and Nip-muck-we, in a delirium caused by fever, had strayed out and fallen in a faint.

This story was probable enough ; but the Indian woman stoutly denied that she had been asleep, and as stoutly averred that the white medicinem-an had come into the lodge, had terrified her until she lost her senses, and had taken the chief up bodily, and carried him away.

The Yankee was unable to prove an alibi, as he had slept alone; but he endeavored to convince his audience of the extreme improbability of the old woman's account, showing that he could hardly lift the Fat Bear, much less carry him from the lodge, saying that it was his business to cure, not to kill, and arguing that no physician would be so foolish as to seek to make way with his patient, after doing all he could to save his life.

His statements and arguments were received with manifest tokens of dissent. Some of the Blackfeet actually believed the marvelous story of the old woman, and others were simply incredulous concerning the Yankee. Their disapprobation was made known to him, and he was ordered to set to work and cure the chief without delay. In the mean time, a guard was placed at the lodge, and one or more warriors followed him wherever he went.

Eben applied himself to his task with a sad and despondent heart. It was plain that he had lost caste with the Blackfeet. He had risen to the highest rank as a medicine-man very suddenly, and appeared likely to fall as rapidly. He had gone up like a rocket, and seemed destined to come down like a stick. He had achieved wonders in the eyes of the Indians, but—he had done nothing since. He must do something to regain his prestige, and what that something should be, was a problem that the Yankee laboriously racked his brain to solve. It was necessary, above all things, that he should keep life in Nip-muck-we, if he wished to retain his own life, and he lost no time in doing all he could for that difficult subject.

In the morning, when he had succeeded in putting some show of life into the Fat Bear, Eben was visited by a delegation of chiefs and warriors, who desired to consult him concerning a grand war-party that was to start out that day. The expedition was to be a very important one, and they wished the distinguished medicine-man and prophet to inform them whether it would succeed.

Here was a new perplexity for the Yankee; a question was presented which he felt himself no more competent to decide, than to solve a problem in differential calculus. Something must be done, however, and he resolved to make a rough guess, and trust to luck for the fulfillment of the prophecy

hoping, in the mean time, that it might be possible for him to escape from the complications that surrounded him.

He consulted his harpoon, with the usual gibberish, carefully examined the sky, and at last announced that the expedition would certainly succeed, unless there should be rain. The Blackfeet dignitaries received this information with all due gravity, and before noon a war-party, comprising most of the braves of the camp, set out for the prairie, after singing the war-song, followed by the acclamations of their friends and the anathemas of Eben.

CHAPTER XIII.

PITCHED BATTLES.

RED PLUME rode rapidly, after leaving Bush and his companions, to bear to his friends and theirs the tidings of the threatened attack of the Blackfeet. He first reached the camp of the white men, and communicated his intelligence to Captain Steele. That gentleman listened to his statements with great composure, and inquired concerning the probable numbers and arms of the hostile Indians, but seemed more particularly anxious to obtain information with regard to his son and his friends, and the white captive in the Blackfeet camp.

The Renegade told him that Frank Steele, David Carver and Bill Bush were safe; that they had been joined by Black Beaver, and were encamped near the Indians, watching for an opportunity to effect the rescue of Ellen Carver and Eben Gookin.

This was the first intelligence that had been received at Captain Steele's camp of the capture of Eben. No one was surprised to learn that he had been taken, but all wondered that he was still alive.

With regard to the captives, the renegade could only give the information that he had received from Black Beaver, to the effect that Ellen was living, but that nothing was known of her condition, and that Eben was strutting about the camp

harpoon in hand, universally acknowledged and respected as a great medicine-man, it being believed by the Blackfeet that he could not only cure the sick, but could bring the dead to life.

This announcement was received with much surprise, as well as gratification.

"Was he educated as a physician, Mrs. Carver?" asked Captain Steele. "I remember an instance of an eastern herb doctor, who was also something of a surgeon, who was taken by the Rickarees, and not only was his life spared, but they kept him in captivity for several years, until a lucky chance enabled him to effect his escape."

"Precious little he knows about medicine, captain," answered the lady. "He 'tended an apothecary's shop when he was young, and may have picked up a little knowledge, but that is all."

"He must have imposed upon the Indians, then, by some Yankee trick, or by the most extraordinary impudence."

"Eben is capable of either the trick or the impudence, sir. He was always a scapegrace, and continually getting into difficulty."

"In that case, it will not be long before the Blackfeet discover and expose the imposture, and there will be an end to his doctoring and his life. I wish we could do something for him and your daughter, but we are now ourselves threatened with an attack, and it is much better to meet these scoundrels on our own ground than on theirs. Besides, my son and Bill Bush are on their trail, and they will do all that men can do, under the circumstances."

Although Captain Steele received with composure the news of the hostile intentions of the Blackfeet, he did not omit to make all proper preparations for the defense of his camp. He ranged his wagons, bales and packs on three sides of a hollow square, the fourth side being protected by the river; brought all his animals within the inclosure, where they were well secured, and ordered all the men to have their arms in readiness to repel an attack at any moment. He felt secure, relying on his barricade, and the rifles in the hands of his own people and the free trappers who had collected in his camp.

As soon as he had furnished Captain Steele with all the information he possessed, Red Plume hastened to the camp of the Nêz Percés, where he had left his La-la, and communicated to them the intelligence of the threatened demonstration by the Blackfeet.

To his astonishment, the tidings were received by his adopted tribe even more coolly than they had been by Captain Steele. The sages got together, it is true, and sagely smoked over the matter, as calmly as the good burghers of New Amsterdam, when the English fleet was coming up the bay; but they were utterly apathetic, and seemed to have no intention of preparing for defense.

The renegade was more than astonished, he was indignant. His fiery Blackfoot blood could not conceive of such pusillanimity, such blind and stupid waiting upon Providence. He made them a speech, full of enthusiasm and eloquence, well calculated to stir up their warlike feelings and incite them to action. He reminded them of the many wrongs they had suffered at the hands of the Blackfeet, of their stolen horses, their burned and plundered villages, their young men slain, their women and children carried into captivity. Were they willing that these outrages should be continued without end? Were they ready to be entirely exterminated by their remorseless enemies, and wiped from the face of the earth? He pointed to their fine drove of horses, scattered over the plain, and asked if they wished that they, too, should become the prey of the boasting despoiler. In conclusion, he urged them to remember their duty and honor as men, as well as their wives and children and their property, and to prepare, like warriors, to repulse the attack in such a manner that the Blackfeet should remember that the Nêz Percés were no more to be reckoned with.

When Red Plume sat down, he was answered by an old chief, who threw a wet blanket upon his ardor.

This individual wanted to know whether old men were to be dictated to by a boy? And who was this boy? A Blackfoot himself, who had been kindly admitted into their tribe, and was he to take the lead in their deliberations? How should it be known that he had spoken the truth? They had not heard of any considerable number of Blackfeet in that

region, and did not suppose that they would dare to venture near the whites. Why should they fight, unless they were obliged to? Why should they expose themselves to be slain, unless a fight was forced upon them? If the Blackfeet came, they would content themselves with taking the horses, and the Nêz Percés could easily procure others. Was it not better to lose the horses, than the lives of their young men? If they were obliged to fight, and were worsted, they could retire upon the camp of the white men, where they would be safe. When the Blackfeet came, they would find the Nêz Percés ready for them; but they would prefer to see, before they believed.

Notwithstanding their promise to be ready, these heroes did nothing but send their women and children to the cover of Captain Steele's camp. Their horses were still allowed to roam the plains, as if for a temptation to marauders, and they themselves smoked and talked as calmly and unconcernedly as if there were no Blackfeet in the world.

Such Quaker-like conduct, as may be supposed, did not suit the hot-hearted renegade, and he quitted his allies in disgust, in order to place his La-la under the protection of the whites. For his own part, he was determined to fight, if he had to fight on his own hook.

On the way, he told La-la how he had seen the spirit of old Nip-muck-we; how it had mysteriously risen out of the ground, and as mysteriously disappeared; how it had glared upon him with fiery eyes, and had pointed at him with a hand all aflame; how he had fled from it in fear; and how it was reported in the Blackfeet camp that the Fat Bear had been brought to life.

La-la was greatly frightened by the account of the ghostly vision. She, as well as her ver, placed no faith in the rumored resuscitation of the chief, but fully believed that Kotselo had seen the ghost of the murdered man, and that such a visitation betokened his speedy death. She entreated him, with tears, to keep out of the fight, for she was sure he would be slain, and she would not lose him then for all the wealth of the prairies. But, her lover was obstinate; not even for her sake would he refrain from taking vengeance on the tribe in which he had been humiliated; the Nêz Percés

were cowards; he would show them how a brave man could fight, and then they would be glad to admit him to their councils.

The Blackfeet did not make their appearance until late in the afternoon of the next day, and then, as might have been expected, they suddenly poured down, brandishing their weapons and shouting their war-cries, upon the almost defenseless camp of the Nêz Percés. Their attention was distracted for a time by the fine drove of horses that was so enticingly spread about upon the plain, and they applied themselves to stampeding the animals, and driving them off in the direction of their own camp.

This gave the peaceful owners of the animals time to seize their weapons, and to fall back on Captain Steele, not in very good order, however. But they were too late, even then, for their warlike assailants were soon upon their heels, sending in among them volleys of arrows and bullets, and compelling them to make a stand in their own defense, to save themselves from being run over and destroyed.

It must be confessed that, when cornered, they fought like men, availing themselves of every cover and inequality in the ground, and using their weapons with good effect against their mounted antagonists. They lost many in killed and wounded, but had the satisfaction of laying low a number of the Blackfeet, and slowly retreated, fighting all the way, until they reached the extemporized fortification of Captain Steele.

The renegade, who had procured a rifle, mounted his horse at the first onset of the Blackfeet, and galloped into the melee, shouting his war-cry, and breathing defiance against his former companions-in-arms. He was always in the front, encouraging his new allies by word and action, using his rifle with marked effect; and seeming to be inspired by fury and desperation, rather than by valor. He was struck in the leg with an arrow, but continued to fight, until the remnant of the defeated party had reached the shelter of the barricades.

The Blackfeet, elated by the acquisition of such a valuable booty, and intoxicated by their easy victory over those they had despoiled, conceived the rash idea of attacking the camp of the white men. They would not have been so foolhardy, perhaps, if they had known the force ready to meet them; but, they were so excited as to be nearly crazy; expecting t,

overpower the hunters and trappers, and to win a rich harvest in their camp. They ought, also, to have been deterred from such an undertaking, by the remembrance of the prophesy of their medicine-man with the big arrow, for he had told them that their expedition would be successful, if no rain should fall, and a shower had commenced during their conflict with the Nêz Percés.

The rain did not dampen their ardor in the least. On they came, galloping and yelling, as if they meant to ride right over the barricade and through the camp.

Captain Steele had not attempted to assist the Nêz Percés, because it was against his rule to interfere in any conflicts among the Indians; but, when he saw that the Blackfeet were preparing to make an attack upon him, he did not try to conceal his joy, for he hoped to give those banditti of the wilderness a lesson that they would be likely to remember.

As the painted, yelling horde dashed on toward the wagons, discharging their arrows and fusees, he did not give the word to fire, until they were quite close, and then such a volley of rifle-bullets was poured into them, as sent them back much faster than they had come.

When beyond range, they halted, and faced about, as if astonished; and then, wheeling to the left, made the circuit of the barricade, and attacked it on the other side. Again they dashed on, as fiercely and as confidently as before; again they were allowed to approach near the line of wagons, and again they were met by the murderous volley of those terrible rifles, which sent them off in utter confusion. They stopped not for their dead or their wounded, and never looked back, as they sped away over the prairie.

Captain Steele, seeing how completely they were routed, instantly resolved to follow up his advantage, and punish them so severely that they would never molest white men again. Like a skillful General, he lost no time, but ordered all his men, except a strong guard for the camp, to mount and pursue. The order was quickly and joyfully obeyed, all the free-trappers gladly volunteering to join in such excellent "sport." The renegade, who had bound up his wounded leg, could not be dissuaded from accompanying them, and he was followed by La-la, who had seized one of the horses of the slain Indians.

The pacific Nêz Percés occupied themselves in endeavoring to collect their horses, which had been stampeded at the commencement of the fight.

The white men did not overtake the flying Blackfeet, until the latter had safely reached their camp, which, as has been stated, was located in a valley by the side of a small river. Advancing up the valley they found their way obstructed by a rude sort of breastwork of logs, brushwood and earth, which the Indians had hastily thrown up, as a defense against attack. Behind this the Blackfeet lay and waited for them, and greeted them, on their approach, with a vigorous discharge of arrows and fusees. Including those who had been left at the camp, the Indians then numbered about one hundred and fifty, while there were only eighty of the whites.

As the odds were not to be counted, if the enemy could be got at, Captain Steele ordered his men to dismount, to picket their horses well in the rear, to take such cover as they could find, and advance against the breastwork as they chose. The position was as follows: The breastwork that fronted the white men was at the narrowest part of the heavily timbered plain, closed in on the right by the river, and on the left by a wooded bluff.

As there was plenty of cover, the men were able to push up within good range of the breastwork, and to deliver their fire with good precision, but without much effect, while they were continually annoyed by the missiles of their antagonists. This was too slow work for Captain Steele, especially as it was now night, although the moon was shining, and it was possible that the Blackfeet might escape under cover of the night. It was necessary to turn the enemy's position.

Accordingly, he ordered twenty-five picked men to ford the river, make a *détour*, recross at a point above the village, and fall upon the rear of the Blackfeet, while he would keep them occupied in front.

In less than an hour, the rifles of the picked party, and a commotion among the Indians before him, told that the attack had been made, and the men under his command charged the breastworks with a yell.

At the same time, shots were heard from an unexpected direction, from the bluff at the left.

CHAPTER XIV.

FRANK STEELE'S ADVENTURE.

THE first thing that Bush, Carver and Frank Steele did, after they were joined by the Delaware, and Red Plume had left them, was to take their horses to a secluded spot, at a distance from the Indian encampment, where they would be secure from observation, and where they might graze. The next thing was, to lay themselves down to sleep, while Black Beaver, who had enjoyed a nap the previous day, kept watch.

After they had eaten their breakfast in the morning, the Delaware, by the advice of Bill Bush, was sent to reconnoiter the Blackfeet camp, and endeavor to gain some intelligence concerning the captives. The two white men, as they could do nothing else, amused themselves in relating adventures. Bush telling tales of wild trapping and hunting exploits, and Steele giving illustrations of life in the settlements. They succeeded in surprising and amusing each other, and were thus enabled to while the hours away, until the Delaware returned, a little after noon.

Black Beaver brought with him some strange trophies, the head-dress, and all the attire complete, of a Blackfoot warrior, blanket, leggings and moccasins, "breech-clout," girdle and knife. Bill Bush greeted the Delaware cordially.

"Hello, Beaver! Glad to see ye back, old hoss. What's the news among the Blackfeet?"

"Big war-party went off this mornin', more'n a hundred warriors. Black Beaver see 'em. But a good many left in camp."

"Jest as I s'posed. Reckon they're gene arter Cap'n Steele and his folks. They'll hev' a nice job fightin' that old b'ar, Cap'n Frank. What's this you've brought, Beaver. Whar' did you git those fixin's?"

"Blackfoot warrior foller'd and crawled arter me. Black Beaver crawled too, and killed him with knife. Took off all he had, and brought 'em here. Maybe so they come some

use. Black Beaver will put on these things, and make himself Blackfoot, and go to camp to-night."

"No, you won't, Beaver, if I can help it!" exclaimed Steele. "That is just the job for me to do, and you have suited me finely this time. I can rig myself up, with your help, to look as thorough a scoundrel and thief as any of them, and I can talk the Blackfeet lingo, too. Let me have the things, Beaver, and I will go to the camp to-night, and I will see the girl, if it is possible, and arrange a plan for her escape."

The Delaware had no objection to this arrangement, as Frank was so anxious to visit the camp, and Bush, after considerable persuasion, was induced to consent to it, though he feared that Frank would hardly be able to adopt the gait and manner of an Indian.

Black Beaver took upon himself the duties of valet-de-chambre. He arranged the young man's hair in the Blackfeet fashion, crowned his head with the arch of feathers, indued him with "breech-clout" and leggings, and then, with the pigments that he always carried, painted his face and breast in the true Blackfeet style, and stained his hands and arms a dirty copper-color. This done, he threw the blanket over Steele's shoulders, and stepped off to admire his work.

"I think it must be well done, Beaver," said Frank, "for I feel as if I could take a scalp at this minute, and as if I could shoot a bow and arrow better than a rifle."

"For my part," said Bush, "I think Beaver is a master-hand. It wouldn't be safe fur you to meet this hoss at night in that rig, Cap'n Frank. I'm kinder duberous about this thing, though. Ef you should git rubbed out, the old m— would lay all the blame on me. However, a willful n— must have his way, and when a gal is pullin' at one end 'n the rope, thar's no use in my layin' hold on t'other."

Having refreshed himself with a hearty supper, young Steele set out, just as it grew dark, on his perilous errand. He was accompanied a part of the way by Bush, Carver, and the Delaware, who took a station on the bluff, from which they could plainly see the Indian village.

Frank worked his way, carefully and silently, down the slope and over the plain, until he reached the lodges, when he

rose to his feet, and walked into the village as if he had just come from a short stroll. It was now dark, but several fires were burning, and women and children, as well as men, were moving idly about, or employed in various occupations. As the young man saw that he attracted no attention, he concluded that his disguise was complete, and walked where he chose, wondering how and where he should find the place of Ellen Carver's imprisonment. As fate would have it, it was not long before he came in sight of the fair captive's cousin, Eben Gookin, the medicine-man of the Big Arrow, whom he approached immediately. Eben was looking cross and sulky, but there was a self-satisfied grin on his long face, as if at least one thing had pleased him.

"Ugh! medicine-man," said Steele, as he tapped this worthy on the shoulder; "tell Injun one thing—is Nip-muck-we dead?"

"No; of course he ain't," snappishly replied Eben, as he turned upon the inquirer. "How do you s'pose he could be dead, when I've got the care of him?"

"Ugh! P'raps chief not so much dead when he come to life."

"Look-a-here, you cantankerous red-skin, don't come around me with any of your infarnal insinuations. If you git me riled, I'll send this big arrer through your copper-colored carcass, quicker'n you can say Jack Robinson!"

"'Sh-sh!" said Steele, in his natural tones. "Don't show that you know me. I am Frank Steele."

"Je-mima! So you've turned up at last. Where the dogs did you come from?"

"Never mind. Speak softly, or we will be noticed. I ave friends near, and have come to help you. Can you tell e where your cousin Ellen is kept?"

"Look-a-here, mister; there's no use in your foolin' around in that direction. I am keepin' company with that gal, and she is under my care."

"There is no use in speakin' of that. I am here to help you as well as her, and can do nothing, unless I find where she is."

"Wa-al, if you can do any thin' in that line, I hope yer will, for I'm in an all-fired bad scrape, and I calcilate my

health will suffer if I stay here much longer. Do you see that lodge yonder, where the Injun is standing? That is where cousin Nelly is, and that chap is on guard."

"Thank you. Don't follow or notice me."

Frank slowly walked to the lodge that Eben had pointed out, and stood by the side of the red-skin. His heart beat quickly, as he felt that he was near the fair captive. He could think of only one plan to pursue—to take the place of the sentry, and watch his chance to steal away with Ellen, under cover of the night. He spoke to the Indian in the Blackfeet tongue.

"Nip-muck-we is better."

"Ugh!"

"The medicine-man thinks he will live."

"Ugh!"

"Does the white maiden sleep?" he asked, as he looked inside of the lodge, and saw Ellen seated on a couch of skins.

"Go away," said the stalwart Indian, as he pulled him back.
"What do you want here?"

"I was told to relieve you from your guard over the captive, and you may go to your lodge."

It was a venturesome game, but it might have succeeded, if the Blackfoot had not received positive orders to watch during the night, and if he had not been a shrewd and suspicious person. He looked wonderingly at the young man, and, as he did so, the light from a neighboring fire fell on Frank's face, and a sudden idea seized the Indian. He quickly wet his finger with his tongue, and as quickly rubbed it on the white man's cheek, removing a portion of the paint, and showing the fair skin underneath. Then, with a yell, he threw himself upon his detected enemy, and grasped him around the waist.

The action was so sudden, and the Indian was so powerful, that Steele was almost borne to the ground at first. But he instantly recovered himself, and got hold of his knife, which he plunged into the throat of his antagonist, who relaxed his grasp and fell.

The young man had no time to lose, as the alarm had been given, and the Indians were hastening to the spot from all parts of the camp. After one hurried glance, he bounded

away toward the bluff, followed by the yelling Blackfeet. He was an excellent runner and easily kept the lead of his pursuers, as he toiled up the ascent; but he would soon have been tired out, had he not met succor in the shape of Bill Bush, who stood at the edge of the slope, with his rifle pointed right at him.

"Shoot the next man, Bill!" shouted Steele, and the sharp crack of the rifle told that the work was done. The Delaware brought down another, and Carver a third, and the Indians were staggered for a few moments by this unexpected resistance. While they were thus in confusion, the friends gained the place at which they had left their horses, and the whites mounted and rode rapidly away, distracting attention from the Delaware, who ran off in another direction.

As none of the Blackfeet were mounted, Steele and his friends were soon out of sight of their pursuers, who gave up the chase.

In the morning they cautiously returned, and were rejoined by the Delaware, when they proceeded to discuss plans for their future operations. None of them had any thought of abandoning the undertaking, but, the greater the difficulty, the more eager they ~~were~~ to carry it out. Frank Steele, in particular, since he ~~had seen~~ Ellen Carver, was so excited and impatient, that Bush could hardly restrain him from making some desperate attempt. It was agreed that nothing could be done in the daytime, and they were unable to form any definite plans for the night. They determined to go, after nightfall, and station themselves as near the encampment as possible, and then ~~the~~ ~~future~~ must take care of itself.

They sallied out from their hiding-place at dusk, and posted themselves at the edge of the bluff, from which they looked down on the camp. It was not long before they noticed an unusual commotion among the Indians, and heard sounds of joy and exultation.

"The war-party has returned and has gained a victory," said Frank. "The whole camp will be awake and excited, and we will be able to do nothing to-night."

There was nothing for it but to wait, and they waited until late in the night, when the sounds of exultation were changed to wailing and lamenting.

"Whipped Injuns!" exclaimed Bush, as he led his companions down the slope, attaining a position quite near the encampment, where they concealed themselves.

They soon saw the greater part of the Blackfeet running to the right, where they hastily threw up a sort of breastwork, and before long the crack of rifles, the reports of fusees, and the mingled yells of the opposing parties, told them that a sharp fight was going on.

"That's our folks, fur sart'in," said Bush. "This hoss is steamin' to be into that thar' fight, but he don't see the chance to mix, jist yet."

He restrained the impatience of Steele and Carver, and they waited until they heard the report of rifles at their left, and observed a new commotion on the plain, when they knew that the camp had been attacked in the rear.

"Now's our time, boys!" exclaimed the trapper, as he sprung up, followed by his companions.

They rushed forward, discharged their rifles at the nearest Blackfeet, quickly reloaded, and hastened toward the lodge in which Ellen Carver was confined, Frank Steele leading the way. As they approached it, they saw a number of Indians running toward it, and saw Eben Gookin, who stood in front of the lodge, strike down one of them with his harpoon.

CHAPTER XV

THE HOME STRETCH—STEELE AHEAD.

EBEN GOOKIN had some cause for wearing a self-satisfied look, when he met Frank Steele disguised as an Indian, for he had been trying pleasing experiments upon old As-moo-tah.

After the war-party had left, his tormentor, the crusty old savage, came to him, and told him that it was time to perform his contract with regard to As-moo-tah. Eben tried to excuse himself on the ground that his attendance on the Fat Bear was necessary; but the plea was not allowed—if his medicine was so powerful, he could at the same time manufacture beauty

for the old squaw and take care of the chief. He then said that he never performed such an operation unless requested to do so by the party concerned. That objection was soon settled, for As-moo-tah was brought forward, and made known her desires in person. As the Yankee looked at the wrinkled face and malicious eyes of the hag, he became, as he would have expressed it, "kinder riled," and resolved to put in practice a plan that he had previously formed.

On the bank of the river, a short distance from the village was a sweating-house. This was a peculiar Indian institution, being a small, tightly-closed building, in which the person to be sweated was shut up, and was steamed by water being slowly poured over hot stones. To this establishment, having arranged it to suit himself, he conducted As-moo-tah, accompanied by the old warrior with the hard name.

He caused a goodly number of stones to be heated very hot, and placed within the sweating-house. He then seated the old woman within, on a very narrow bench, and gave to her to hold in her left hand, a string, which passed over a sort of pulley in the roof, and from the other end of which depended a loosely-tied bag, filled with small stones. In her right hand he put a fragment of looking-glass, which she had procured in the village, and told her that, while she held the string and looked in the glass, she would perceive herself growing gradually handsome, and if she persevered until the stones were cooled, she would come out perfectly beautiful. He shut her up in the building, fastened the door, told her that she must do exactly as he had ordered, or the charm would be broken, and directed a couple of Indian boys to pour water slowly upon the stones, through tubes that he had "fixed." He then went away with the old Indian.

The sequel may be imagined. The old hag had a natural desire for beauty, and more than half believed in the extravagant pretensions of Eben. As the steam began to rise around her, and to fill the small inclosure, she gazed intently on the glass, and was sure that the wrinkles on her face were fading away, the steam tending to produce that effect. When the glass was so dimmed that it reflected nothing, her imagination supplied the mirror, and she saw herself becoming transfigured. But the steam was even more powerful than her

imagination; her limbs gradually relaxed; she felt an oppressive sense of faintness, and then thought that she would give up all hope of beauty, if she could but escape from that place. But she was powerless to move; and when she tried to ask the boys on the outside to cease pouring water on the stones, and to let her out, she could hardly raise her voice above a whisper. Still, she held the string and the glass, with a perseverance worthy of any cause, until she could sit up no longer; the string slipped from her fingers, the bag of pebbles dropped, the glass fell in fragments on the stones, and As-moo-tah rolled off her seat, quite insensible.

When about two hours had expired, Eben announced to the old warrior that it was then time to go and see her, and they set out together. On the way, he assured the old fellow with the hard name that he should soon see, if As-moo-tah had obeyed his orders, the most beautiful squaw his eyes had ever beheld.

When they reached the sweating-house, the Indian boys were still there, but they had ceased to pour water through the tubes, as the stones were cold, and no more steam issued from the crevices of the building. Eben consulted his harpoon, muttering the usual gibberish, and then gravely informed the old warrior that the charm was broken, for As-moo-tah had not done as he had told her to do. In proof of this assertion, he opened the door, and there lay the scattered stones in one place, and the broken glass in another, and the old woman, who was just beginning to recover, was sitting up on the stones. They took her out and dipped her in the river—for she was as lax as a wet rag—until she recovered a portion of her strength.

The old warrior was disposed to accuse Eben of swindling, or having so arranged the matter that it would be impossible for the woman to hold the string and the glass; but the Yankee, quite unexpectedly to himself, was sustained by As-moo-tah, who had not forgotten the effects produced by her excited imagination, and was sure that she had seen her face changing, and growing beautiful, until the glass fell.

Thus it was that the Yankee's countenance bore an expression of partial satisfaction, when he met Frank Steele at night. Although Steele had told him not to follow, he watched from

a convenient distance, and saw his deadly encounter with the sentry at Ellen's lodge, and his subsequent flight and pursuit. When the Indians returned from chasing him, bringing no prisoner, and reported that two of their number had been killed and one badly wounded, Eben went to his lodge and laid down to sleep, with a more satisfactory feeling than he had lately experienced.

The next day, however, his uneasiness returned, and even increased. Nip-muck-we was slowly but surely sinking, and it was apparent that his life could not be prolonged much longer; in fact he might drop off at any moment. Eben did all he could to keep him up, but the candle of life was flickering in the socket. Again, As-moo-tah had become loud in his praise, and everywhere proclaimed the almost successful result of the beauty-making experiment. This was satisfactory, but there was too much reason to fear that he might be besieged by a crowd of old women, who, deeming themselves sufficiently strong to undergo the ordeal, would clamor to be made beautiful. His position was, indeed, an awkward one; it seemed that whenever he achieved a success, it brought him into trouble, and he knew that the penalty of failure would be certain death.

So Eben passed a long and troubled day, wishing that he could get an interview with his cousin, but finding no chance of even seeing her, although he had been relieved from the surveillance that had recently annoyed him. The wonderful report of As-moo-tah had tended to raise him in the estimation of the public, but he saw that the spiteful old warrior still had his suspicions, and knew that he would let slip no opportunity of making mischief. In the evening, a shower of rain fell, and Eben thought of his prophecy in regard to the war-party. He wished that he had not complicated the matter by speaking about the rain, but he had felt sure, from his knowledge of weather-signs, that there would be showers, and he shrewdly guessed that, if an attack was made on Captain Steele's party, the expedition would fail. Still, he could not help feeling uneasy, for in any event, there would be dead chiefs for him to bring to life, or wounded men for him to cure.

Shortly after dark, a few of the war-party, who had parti-

cipated in the easy victory over the Nêz Percés, returned with shouts of triumph, bringing in a number of horses. They gave glowing accounts of their great achievement, and said that the rest of the warriors would soon arrive with a great booty. There was great joy and excitement in the camp, and the crusty old fellow with the long name took advantage of the opportunity to vent his spite upon Eben, and to turn the popular tide against him. He publicly proclaimed that the pretended medicine-man lied, that rain had fallen, and yet the war-party had been gloriously successful. If he had made the false prophecy willfully, he was a traitor to the tribe; if not, he was a base impostor; in any event, he was a liar, and deserved to die.

The old fellow's harangue produced such an impression upon the men, that they would have immediately immolated the unfortunate Yankee, had it not been for the interference of the women, headed by As-moo-tah, who had no idea of permitting the secret of manufacturing beauty to go out of the tribe. The female influence was felt among the Blackfeet, as well as among civilized people, but the contest was a serious one, and it was doubtful which side would win, when the return of the defeated and pursued warriors changed the scene. Nothing more was said against Eben's powers of prophecy and he was allowed to go his way in peace.

He was glad to escape from this danger, but felt that he was immediately threatened with another, as a dead, or wounded man might, at any moment, be brought to him for treatment.

The Blackfeet, however, had no time to look after their dead or wounded, or to think of their medicine-man. Eben soon heard a continual firing and yelling, and was aware that the battle between the whites and the red-men had commenced. As it was uncertain which side would win, he devoted his attention to his patient, who was rapidly expiring. As he bent over the couch, and watched the chief's feeble struggles for life, a warrior looked in, and asked about Nip-muck-we.

"He is gettin' along purty well," answered Eben.

The Indian turned away, and the Fat Bear breathed his last breath.

As Eben waited, uncertain what to do, he heard firing from

another quarter, and noticed a stampede in the camp. He picked up his harpoon, stepped outside, and saw that the sentry had gone from Ellen's lodge. He hastened thither, and had hardly reached it, when he was confronted by half-a-dozen Blackfeet.

Resolved to perish in the defense of his cousin, and to get as much revenge as he could, the Yankee swung his harpoon around his head, struck down his foremost assailant, and cleared a space before the lodge. But the Indians pressed him, his foot slipped, he fell, and thought all was over, when there was a sharp cracking of rifles, and Bill Bush, Frank Steele, Nathan Carver and the Delaware, rushed upon the Blackfeet, who had been reinforced.

There was a fierce and bloody hand-to-hand encounter. David Carver attacked a tall savage who was entering the lodge, and was stabbed to the heart for his temerity. The next instant, the savage was brained by the butt of Bush's rifle, and Steele sprung within. He saw a sight that made him leap forward more quickly, for an Indian, with uplifted knife, was bending over the prostrate form of Ellen Carver. Frank threw himself upon the savage, and struck him with his knife, with all his force, in the back of the neck. The knife was shivered, but the spinal column of the Blackfoot was broken, and his arm, as well as the rest of his frame, was paralyzed. Frank stepped out to assist his companions, but they had finished their work, and he returned to the care of Ellen.

CHAPTER XVI.

CONCLUSION.

THE battle was over. Captain Steele and his men, charging furiously on the breastwork, carried it with a rush.

Frank Steele, as has been said, devoted himself to the care of Ellen Carver, for the strong New England girl had fainted as any girl might have done, if attacked by a painted savage with a bloody knife. He soon succeeded in restoring her

suspended animation, and felt himself the happiest fellow in the world, when she opened her eyes upon him with an expression of tenderness, as well as gratitude.

Eben Gookin, as soon as he could regain his feet, took an active part in the combat around the lodge, doing good service with his long harpoon.

His attention was attracted to a group on the plain, collected round the body of a fallen Indian. Eben walked up to them, and perceived that the man on the ground was Red Plume. La-la was kneeling by his side, bitterly lamenting in her own language.

"Darned if that ain't the chap who killed my patient!" said Eben; "and that's the gal who was with him. What is she sayin'?"

"She says," answered one of the trappers, "that she begged him not for to go into that fight, 'cause he had seen the ghost of an Injun he had killed, and that's a sure sign of death."

"When did he see the ghost?"

"A few nights ago, somewhar' 'bout here."

"Jist you tell her, mister, that it's no such thing, for the old rascal was alive then. He is dead enough now, but it was hardly half an hour ago that he pegged out."

The Yankee knelt down, and looked at the prostrate renegade.

"Sart'ainly, I will," he said, in reply to a request from La-la to restore her lover to life. "Bring me some water."

Water was brought, and liberally used. The effect was, that Red Plume, who had been merely stunned by a spent ball, slowly revived, and sat up.

Eben told her, if she wished to be sure that Nip-muck-we was dead, he would show her his corpse, but she shuddered at the proposition, and he went alone, to take a last look at the departed chief.

"Darn you, for a big old bundle of grease!" he exclaimed, as he shook his bent harpoon at the inanimate form of the Fat Bear. "You've cost me a nation sight of anxiety; but I won't abuse you now, as you happened to hold onto your life as long as it was of any use to Eben Gookin."

Captain Steele and his party remained at the scene of the battle, resting themselves, and attending to various duties, until

late in the morning, when they took up their line of march for their own camp, bearing the body of David Carver, as the kind and gentlemanly captain did not overlook the natural desire of his parents to view his remains.

Nathan Carver and his wife were, of course, overjoyed at the safe return of Ellen, but their joy was overbalanced by their grief at the death of their only son.

It was arranged that they should go with one of Captain Steele's parties, that was to start for Missouri early in the Fall. They were content to remain, in the mean time, at his camp, which was the general rendezvous, through the season, for his trading and trapping expeditions.

Frank Steele did not omit to improve the opportunity for forming a more intimate acquaintance with Nelly Carver, and the attachment that had been begun in scenes of excitement and peril soon ripened into the warmest love. It was not long before the young man proposed to her parents that they should, instead of making a long and useless journey to Massachusetts, give him Nelly for his wife, and remain with him in Missouri. After due, and doubtless prayerful consideration, they consented to both requests, and Captain Steele had not the least idea of opposing an arrangement that pleased Frank so well.

Eben Gookin had viewed the intimacy between Frank and Ellen with great displeasure, but, he knew of no way to stop it. She might as well have stayed at home in Massachusetts, he thought, for she was bound to find good-looking lovers wherever she went. She was always kind and cousinly to him, but it was plain that her smiles, and all those numberless little favors that a damsel so well knows how to bestow where

she chooses, were reserved for his dark-eyed rival.

At last he concluded to learn his fate, as the novelists say, and opened his mind to his cousin as soon as he found her alone.

"Say, now, cousin Nelly," he began, "as you and the old folks are talkin' about goin' back to Massachusetts, I thought I'd speak to you about somethin' that interests you and me. You know that I've been kinder settin' up to you for a good while, and you can't have any doubt that I love you, and after all I've been through here in the wilderness, and all I've done

and tried to do for you, don't you think you can make up your mind to marry me?"

" You have asked me too late, cousin Eben," said Ellen, with a very serious countenance, " for I am engaged to Frank Steele."

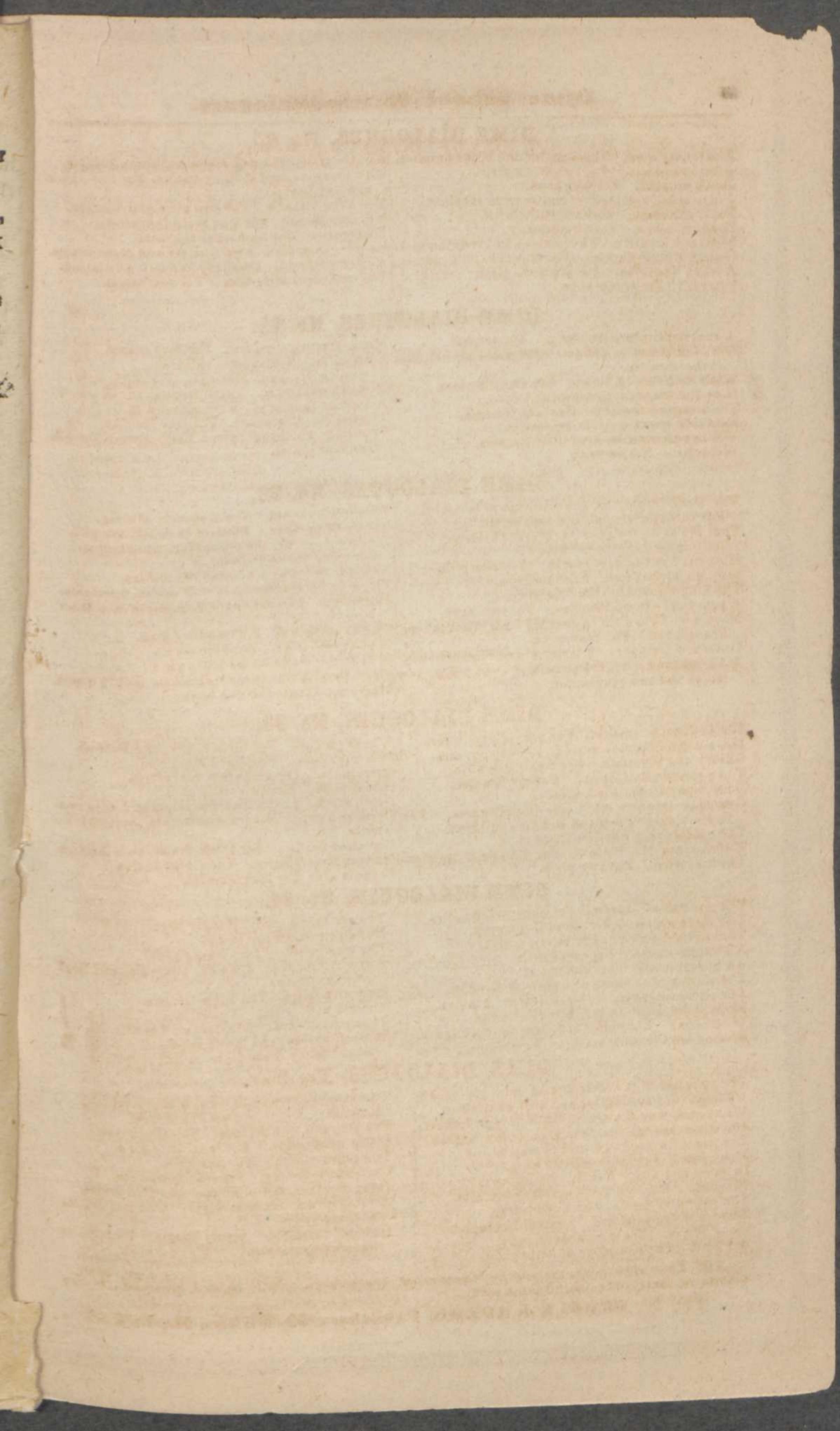
" Sho! Is that so, now? So quick, too? That ain't the way the business is done up in Massachusetts. But, as it's done, it can't be helped. I thought, bein' cousins so, and arter all I've been through, that perhaps—"

" You must not suppose," interrupted Ellen, " that I do not appreciate your love, your kindness, your goodness, your courage, and all you have done and attempted for me. I do appreciate them, and shall always thank and bless you for them; but, Frank Steele is the man I love."

" Wa-al, if there wasn't any handsome fellers in this world, perhaps I might have a chance. Let it drop, cousin Nelly."

As soon as the Fall set in, Frank Steele started for the east with a train, accompanied by Ellen and her parents, Nathan Carver being then quite able to travel. It was not long after his arrival at his home, before he was married to the fair girl whom he had met in the wilderness. He established himself as a fur-trader in Missouri, leaving his case-hardened father to attend to trading and trapping, and fighting in the far West.

Red Plume was chosen as a chief by the Nêz Percés, and Eben Gookin, having determined to remain in that region, concluded to share the fortunes of the dashing young warrior



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